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# HINTS

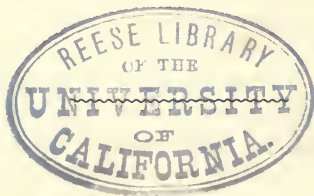
ON THE

## INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

BY

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## PREFACE.

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No apology is necessary for engaging in the investigation of the subjects, which are briefly treated of in the following sheets. These matters are of deep interest to every inquiring Christian; and the character of the Scriptures, in the view of the world, is in no small degree concerned with them. Unbelievers reproach us with giving credit to a book which is full of enigmas, and allege that every one interprets it according to his own fancy, and so as to support his own particular opinions. Nor is this all. They even charge ambiguity upon the Scriptures themselves; and they are apparently moved to do this, by the ever varying, discrepant, and sometimes even opposite conclusions of expositors. No book, they say, which is plainly and honestly written, could possibly afford room for such diversity of opinion.

Particularly have such charges been made against the *prophecies*. These have been compared to the ambiguous vaticinations of the heathen oracles, and pronounced to be deserving of merely the same credit which is given to them by enlightened minds.

One might reply to all this by saying, that the *abuse* of a thing is no good argument against the right and proper *use* of it; that the mistakes of expositors are not chargeable upon the original writers, unless those mistakes are unavoidably connected with the expressions of these writers; and finally, that when men, ill-informed or ignorant of the true

nature of scriptural language, misinterpret or pervert it, it can be no good ground of objection to the sacred books as they are in themselves.

If, in addition to such a reply, it can be shown that the *prophecies*, against which the charges in question are specially directed, are susceptible of a plain, fair, and natural interpretation, and that historical *facts* accord with such an interpretation, the stumbling block that is cast in our way would seem to be removed.

An attempt to do this, in regard to some of the more important prophetic passages, which have of late years been the subject of frequent and animated discussion, is made in the following pages. To write a large volume on such topics would be comparatively easy; to select, combine, and exhibit matter appropriate to a small one, is a more difficult task.

If the path in which I travel should be thought by some to be *new*, I hope this will not prevent any reader from giving it a leisurely and thorough examination, before he abandons it. If some of the *results*, in this little treatise, should appear *new* to the reader, I must suggest to him, that they are not the consequence of seeking after novelties, but simply of following out the plain and obvious principles of interpretation. If he does not, after examination, find it to be so, let him condemn the book.

✓ If there be any Bible *for us*, it is one which consists of human language, interpreted in a manner consonant with the laws of language. My principal object is, to protest against the substitution of fancy and conjecture in the interpretation of the Scriptures, in the place of established principle and rule. With a sincere love for all that is new, whenever it is better than the old, I am still, throughout this book, a thorough *Conservative* in respect to the fixed and immutable principles of reasonable hermeneutics. I hope for a hearing—

I will not despair even of approbation—by those who love this species of *Conservatism*. At all events, if it must be that any are disposed to turn away from the subject with only a slight examination of it, and thus decline to give me a fair opportunity to gain their assent, I would at least say: Πάταξον μὲν, ἄκουσον δέ!

It is time for the churches, in reference to the matters now before us, to seek some refuge from the tumultuous ocean on which they have of late been tossed. To those who long for a quiet harbour, a chart, which offers even any tolerable grounds of hope that the course toward such a haven is marked out, will not be unwelcome.

I make no promises. I have satisfied myself as to the course which ought to be pursued; and in this state of mind it is natural to cherish a hope, that a process of thinking and reasoning, similar to that through which I have passed, may satisfy others. With this desire I give my little book to the public.

Some of the views, which are exhibited in the following pages, may be found in the early volumes of the *Biblical Repository*, ranged under different titles. But they are here repeated with many modifications and additions. If continued and often repeated study and reflection have not corrected them, in some respects, they have at least served to expand them. There is, moreover, some important advantage in having them brought together, and exhibited so that a comparison of them may be easily made.

The introduction of a few Hebrew and Greek words was unavoidable, in the execution of my plan. For the most part these are so managed, as to occasion no serious embarrassment to the well-informed English reader.

M. STUART.

*Theol. Seminary, Andover,* }  
15th June, 1842.

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# HINTS

## RESPECTING THE

### INTERPRETATION OF PROPHECY.

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#### § 1. INTRODUCTION.

THE history of scriptural interpretation presents few, if any, phenomena more peculiar than those which have been exhibited, by some of the modes in which parts of the books of Daniel and of the Revelation have been explained, by a large class of English and American expositors. It would be a difficult task to enumerate all the writers of the class in question, who have made their appearance before the public; and still more difficult, to make out even a sketch of all their peculiar and in some respects ever varying interpretations. It is no part of my present design to attempt this. As a polemic, or an antagonist of particular writers, it is not my wish or intention to appear. Nor is it at all within my purpose to write a book on the general subject of expounding prophecy. My design is, to keep strictly within the bounds designated by the title of this Essay; and therefore I shall attempt no more than to give some HINTS, addressed to the consideration of the Christian public, in respect to some two or three of the principles gene-



rally adopted by the expositors already named, in their interpretation of Daniel and of the Apocalypse.

✓ The subjects of discussion to which I have adverted, may be comprised under three distinct heads. The first is the proposition, that there is in many parts of the prophecies, an occult, mystical, undeveloped meaning, which renders those predictions occasionally pregnant with a double sense. The second, that some other prophecies have a meaning which is so concealed and obscure, that it can never be discovered until the events take place to which they refer. The third is, that the leading designations of *time* in the book of Daniel and the Apocalypse, viz. "a time, times, and half a time," and "forty and two months or twelve hundred and sixty days," comprise, not the actual period literally named, but 1260 *years*. In other words, the general principle, in respect to this third head, is, that the *times*, named in the two books before us, are designed to be understood as meaning, that each *day* is the representative of a *year*.

✓ For a long time these principles have been so current among the expositors of the English and American world, that scarcely a serious attempt to vindicate them has of late been made. They have been regarded as so plain, and so well fortified against all objections, that most expositors have deemed it quite useless to defend them. One might indeed almost compare the ready and unwavering assumption of these propositions, to the assumption of the first self-evident axioms in the science of geometry, which not only may dispense with any process of ratiocination in their defence, but which do not even admit of any.

✓ If I have overstated the confidence that has been felt and exhibited as to the principles in question, it is not from design. I have stated merely the impression that has been made on my own mind, by the perusal of many expositors

of prophecy; and I would merely make the appeal to every intelligent reader, whether my representation is not substantially correct.

Is it lawful and safe, now, to call in question a mode of interpretation so generally admitted, and which has so long been current among us? *Lawful*, I think, it may be; for the Scriptures have prescribed to us none of these rules, nor have any of the creeds of Protestants dictated any thing which binds us to admit them. *Safe* it may be, provided *truth* admits of our questioning such rules; and surely it must be safe, if truth demands that we should reject them, for it is always safe and proper to follow truth.

The true and legitimate principles of interpretation depend on no individual man, no sect, no party. They are independent of all parties, else they would be of little or no value. They depend on no niceties of philosophical theories, on no far fetched and recondite deductions, on no caprice of fancy or imagination. Were they so dependent, they would be of little value even to the learned, and of none at all to the great mass of men who read the Scriptures.

The origin and basis of all true hermeneutical science are the reason and common sense of men, at all times and in all ages, applied to the interpretation of language either spoken or written. The faculty of interpreting is as natural as the faculty of speaking; and the rules or principles of interpretation are formed merely by observing how the faculty of exegesis develops itself. All *science of interpretation* so called, all modes of expounding language proposed by whomsoever they may have been, (unless indeed they may truly be the result of inspiration), which are not founded on the simple basis described above, can put in no just claim to our confidence, and have no right to exact our homage.

A *scientific* digest of the principles of interpretation, if rightly prepared, would be made in the like way as a grammatical treatise. In the latter case, the usages of language as to the forms of nouns, verbs, pronouns, etc., are first observed; then the manner in which sentences are constructed. A simple and true account of these constitutes what we call the *Grammar* of any language. So is it, also, in respect to Hermeneutics or the science of interpretation. The general usage of intelligent men, in respect to interpreting the language which they hear or read, is first observed, and then a record of this is made and reduced to a scientific form. The result is, *a book of Hermeneutics*.

Nothing can be more certain, than that language was not constructed by the aid of grammar as a *science*; for this science is only a regular digest of facts observed in respect to language already spoken, with some obvious deductions of general principles from these. These principles the rational nature of man, when employed in speaking or writing, *instinctively* follows. They are not matters of calculation and of consciously designed effort. So also in Hermeneutics; the principles of interpreting what we hear or read, are instinctive; they belong to our rational nature. Science only collects and arranges them, and draws deductions from them.

If this account be correct as to the origin of the science of interpretation, it would seem to follow, that any principle inconsistent with the general laws which our nature and reason have prescribed, or any principle beyond the circle of that prescription, cannot be safely trusted. Should any one ask: Why do the proper principles of Hermeneutics address themselves to all intelligent men with an imperative force? The answer is, that they are imperative, because they are the laws of our communicative nature and faculties—because we find the basis of them within



ourselves, and are conscious therefore of their binding force. But suppose that we are called upon to give our assent to a rule of interpretation which is not founded in the usages of men, nay which is even contrary to these or inconsistent with them, are we obliged to yield assent? Just as much, I answer, as we should be to yield our assent to a proposition in grammar, which would convert into a rule of the English language the *patois* of some little district or village. For example; not far from the place where I am writing, is a small collection of people, who have, no one knows how long, been accustomed to say: *I does*; *I reads this*; *I goes to-morrow*, etc. Shall this be inserted, now, as an additional rule for the declension and use of verbs in the next edition of Murray's English Grammar? If you answer in the negative, then why should a rule of interpretation foreign to general usage, or inconsistent with it, be adopted into a treatise on Hermeneutics?

## § 2. OCCULT OR DOUBLE SENSE OF PROPHECY.

The bearing of what has been said, the reader will speedily perceive. Our first question, as above proposed, is, whether we are to regard the position, that "there are many occult passages in the prophecies, which are pregnant with a *double* meaning," as a position founded in the common-sense principles and usages of mankind as to the interpretation of language?

On this question I shall now proceed to make a few remarks; keeping in view, however, the title of this Essay, and remembering that I am pledged only to give HINTS, and not to write a *Thesaurus* of hermeneutical science.

I must first of all define the meaning of *double sense*, so that the subject of discussion may be distinctly understood.

If we ascribe to any passage of Scripture a literal, ob-

✓ vious, historical sense; and interpret it as conveying the meaning which its words naturally and obviously seem to convey, and yet at the same time ascribe to these same words another meaning which is occult or obscure, but still is designed to be conveyed by those same words, we then make out a *double* sense. For example; if the second Psalm is construed as a description of the coronation of David or Solomon on the hill of Zion, and all that is there said be literally and historically applied, and still we go on to find in this same Psalm, that is, in the *words* of it, a secondary or *spiritual* sense (as it is often named), then we give to it a *double* sense. We first ascribe to it an obvious and historical meaning, endeavoring to make this out in the best manner that we can; and then we suppose that there is a *ὑπόνοια*, i. e. an occult or secondary and spiritual meaning, by virtue of which the Psalm becomes applicable to *Christ*, the true and spiritual Messiah. So, to produce another example, if we interpret the 45th Psalm as an epithalamium or nuptial song, on the occasion of Solomon's marriage with a foreign princess, and endeavor to adapt every thing in it to the historical sense consequent upon such a method of exegesis, and yet after we have executed this task, we proceed to show, or at least endeavor to show, that a *ὑπόνοια* runs through the whole, by virtue of which we may find a description of the King Messiah and of his union with the Church, then we give to this Psalm a *double* sense.

The question now before us is: Whether this is a reasonable, practicable, well-grounded method of interpreting the Scriptures?

I shall not stop here to argue with those, who, finding difficulty in such a direct and palpably occult sense throughout the whole of those two Psalms, expound one part of the second Psalm, for example, as historically descriptive

of the literal David, and the other part as belonging to the King Messiah, because it seems incapable of a literal application to David, except by doing violence to the meaning of the words. In like manner do they expound many other portions of the Old Testament Scriptures. I do not stop to argue with such expositors, because the violence which is done to sound rules of interpretation, by arbitrarily introducing *two* subjects of the writer's discourse, when he plainly and obviously presents but one, is so great, that but little danger to the churches can ever arise from such an error. It is so plainly a trespass against the laws of our nature as to the interpretation of language; it is so arbitrary in its proceedings, when it appropriates one part of the text to one subject, and another part, which is indissolubly connected, to another and totally different subject; that nothing like a general persuasion of propriety in practising such a method of interpretation can ever be brought about. There are indeed those who so interpret many passages of the Old Testament; there have been such in days that are past; but, as I have already said, it is doing such violence against the first principles of our reason as to the interpretation of language, that little or no serious evil can well be supposed to flow from it. The imagination of some readers may be excited and pleased by the ingenuity of such devices, but the sober understanding and judgment of none can be satisfied. That must always be a wavering and uncertain state of mind, which follows the adoption of such views; and the faith, which is connected with them, must be feeble, tottering, doubtful, and mostly inoperative. Nature abused and driven away will sooner or later return and claim and vindicate her rights. The common sense of men must ultimately prevail over whim and caprice.

It is the other method of interpretation, namely, that

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which makes a primary and secondary meaning *throughout* such passages of Scripture as are supposed to relate to the new dispensation, that has been the usual and prevalent one among those who defend the *ὑπόνοια* or occult sense. This then must be at least briefly examined.

The first and great difficulty with this scheme of interpretation is, that *it forsakes and sets aside the common laws of language*. The Bible excepted, in no book, treatise, epistle, discourse, or conversation, ever written, published, or addressed by any one man to his fellow beings, (unless in the way of sport, or with an intention to deceive), can a *double* sense be found. There are, indeed, *charades*, enigmas, phrases with a double *entendre*, and the like, perhaps, in all languages; there have been abundance of heathen oracles which were susceptible of *two* interpretations; but among even all these, there never has been, and there never was a design that there should be, but *one* sense or meaning in reality. Ambiguity of language may be, and has been, designedly resorted to in order to mislead the reader or hearer, or in order to conceal the ignorance of soothsayers, or provide for their credit amid future exigencies; but this is quite foreign to the matter of a serious and *bona fide* double meaning of words. It bears no comparison with the alleged *ὑπόνοια* in question. Nor can we, for a moment, without violating the dignity and sacredness of the Scriptures, suppose that the inspired writers are to be compared to the authors of riddles, conundrums, enigmas, and ambiguous heathen oracles.

How then can we make a rule for interpretation, and apply this rule to the Scriptures, when we are constrained to acknowledge, that no other book on earth, addressed by intelligent and serious men to the reason and understanding of their fellow beings, can bear an interpretation by such a rule?



I am aware of the usual answer to this question, viz., that "the Bible is a *divine book*, and that, since God is the real author of it, we must not expect to place it on the common basis of other books."

But how can we be satisfied with such an answer? I am indeed fully persuaded, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God." I believe the Bible to be of *divine* authority; and that *the men who wrote the Scriptures were under divine influence which guarded them against error or mistake, when they composed the sacred books.* I have no hesitation in admitting and defending these positions. But I cannot deduce from them any thing in the way of defending a *double sense*. For why should we suppose, because the Bible is a divine book, that its manner, style, or diction, differs essentially from those of all other books? We may well suppose the *matter* to transcend the discoveries of unenlightened reason. But why should the *manner* of communicating information to us, differ from what is usual and common among men? Nay, we may boldly advance further, and ask, how the Bible could be what it is, viz., a *revelation* from God, provided its diction and the principles of interpreting it are to be regarded as entirely diverse from those of all other books. What can be more rational or plain than the proposition, that when God speaks to men for their instruction, he speaks by man, and for men, and therefore *expects to be understood*. Did ever a considerate father undertake to teach his children, and yet employ language the words and exegetical principles of which were entirely beyond their cognizance? And when God speaks to his erring children, with an intention to enlighten and instruct them, and to reclaim them from their wandering ways, does he employ words in such a manner, that no analogy drawn from human methods of interpret-

ing language can enable men to understand what he communicates?

✓ Independently of the disputed question before us, no man on earth would hesitate a moment as to the answer which he must give. A *revelation* must be *intelligible*, or it is no revelation. It must be made in language that men have been accustomed to use, or they have no key to it. And if it be made in such a language, then it must be interpreted by the common rules and usages of language, else there is no key again to the meaning. A revelation in the peculiar language of angels, (if they can be supposed to use a language), would have no meaning, and be of no use to men. Who possesses the appropriate dictionary or commentary? Who has studied the grammar and idiom? A revelation (so called) to men, which is clothed in words not employed agreeably to the *usus loquendi*, and not to be interpreted by the usual principles of exegesis, is of course no revelation at all. It is no more than sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal; for it neither gives any distinct, articulate, intelligible sounds, nor does it represent them to the eye. It is in vain, therefore, that we seek for any *rules*, by which such a book can be explained.

✓ Indeed, the moment we assume that there is in the Scriptures a departure from the *usus loquendi*, either in the choice of words, the construction of sentences, or the modes of interpretation, that moment we decide, that they are no *revelation*. According to such an assumption, moreover, a necessity would of course be presented for a new inspiration, in order to find out and comprehend what the authors of the scriptural books meant. But if a new inspiration be needed, then of what use or advantage are the Scriptures, or have they ever been, to men? It would be just as easy to communicate a revelation *de novo* to men,

so often as they needed one, as it would be to render them inspired in order that they might understand what had been already communicated. Nothing then could be gained by such a Bible as the case before us supposes.

We must therefore either concede that the *usual* laws of language are to be applied to the Bible, or else that it is, and can be, no proper revelation to men, unless they are also to be inspired in order to understand it. For if we suppose words are to be employed, and sentences constructed and interpreted, in a manner entirely new and different from all that has hitherto been known or practised, then there is no source from which we can derive rules to interpret the Bible, unless it be one which is supernatural and miraculous. Who then is it, that has a just claim to *supernatural* instruction or illumination? Among all the contending and antagonist parties, some of whom have virtually claimed such inspiration, who is in the right, and is to be heard and confided in with respect to his claim?

These views may serve to show, that we must give up any pursuit, in this direction, after a *terra firma* on which we can with confidence fix our resting place. Either God has spoken *more humano* by men to men, or he has not spoken what they can with any good assurance pretend to understand without miraculous aid.

A *divine book* therefore, must, like all other books, be *intelligible* in order to be useful; and if intelligible, then it must conform to the *usus loquendi*, both in respect to the choice of words and the meaning of them. How then can the Scriptures present us every where with examples of the *ὑπόνοια* or *double sense*, when we find, and expect to find, such a sense in no other grave book on the face of all the earth?

To prevent all misunderstanding of what I mean, however, it is proper to add here, that I do not by any means design to detract from the force of those passages of Scripture, which declare that religious *experience* is necessary to a full and spiritual understanding of some portions of the Bible. What is true of other books must, in the way of analogy, be true of the Bible also. We do not expect any one fully to understand Milton's *Paradise Lost*, who has little or nothing of a poetical taste. We can not suppose that any one, who is destitute of attachment to mathematical and philosophical science, should enter fully into the comprehension of a La Place or a Bowditch. Even so with the Scriptures which unfold a spiritual and experimental religion. Religious experience is necessary to the full and adequate understanding of such passages as relate to such experience. But all this is far enough from establishing a *double sense*. In truth, all this is only in the way of analogy with regard to other books besides the Scriptures.

If now there were no other obstacle in the way of a double sense, except that it is entirely different from and opposed to all analogy in respect to interpreting language, this one consideration would come near to settling the question. Nothing but divine authority for such a mode of interpretation could make it proper to practise it.

But *secondly*, there are other difficulties in abundance; and a few of them must be brought into notice. The very name, *ὑπόνοια* or *occult sense*, shows that the meaning in question is not deducible from or by the laws of language; for it is against the usage of all times and nations to employ language in such a way. The question then arises, of course: *How is an occult sense to be ascertained?*

Lexicons, grammars, hermeneutics, yea vernacular power over a language, are all set aside by the process that we are investigating. To what arbiter then shall we repair?



Who or what is to decide, so that we may put confidence in the decision?

Is fancy, or imagination, or the spirit of allegorizing, to sit on the throne of judgment? These judges, as I apprehend, are hardly grave and sober and considerate enough to be trusted with so weighty and difficult questions. Besides, inasmuch as the matter now before us is not one within the province of common sense, but one *sui generis* and altogether beyond the reach of scientific principles, who among the many judges, differing widely from each other, and often standing opposed to each other, is to be acknowledged as the *Supreme Court*? Candidates for this honor, I am aware, make their appearance on all sides. All, moreover, possess equal authority, unless some one or more can show that he or they are inspired. By what rule or principle shall we adjust their conflicting claims? By the degree of learning which they possess, or the strength of imagination, or the dexterous power to draw vivid fancy-sketches, or the depth of piety? None of these principles of judging will answer our purpose. It were easy to name men to whom some one of these characteristics belongs in a high degree, who nevertheless have indulged in most extravagant phantasies as to making out the double or second sense of Scripture. Some examples of this nature will be produced in the sequel, but at present we are merely concerned with the principle. In the usual cases of exegetical error, we have a test to which an appeal may be made, and this is, the laws and usages of language in general. If men will not conform to these, in their criticisms, then one may justly show their unreasonableness, and thus deprive their exegesis of any important influence. But in the case before us, we have launched on an ocean without bottom or shore, and have neither chart, compass, or rudder. How we are safely and surely

to steer our course, no one, so far as my knowledge extends, has yet shown us.

In fact, unless we say that every man's own fancy is his rule, in the matter of an *occult* sense, I wot not where we are to find a rule. Is there any resort except to *inspiration*? I can see no other. If then we should resort to inspiration as the guide—whose inspiration, or alleged inspiration, is to be trusted? I am aware that there are claimants, even on this ground. But we are not accustomed to give credit to claims of such a nature, since apostolic times. When interpreters will heal the sick, and raise the dead, and cast out devils, we will begin to bow submissively to their alleged authority for making out a second or occult sense. Until that time has arrived, I would hope that we may be permitted to withhold our assent from their decisions, provided we find them not well supported.

From its very nature, *an occult sense is one which language does not naturally convey*. Of course, nothing less than the authority and influence which dictated any particular passage of Scripture, can with certainty inform us what the hidden or secondary sense of it is.

In the third place, if such a principle of interpreting Scripture be admitted, *how is it possible to ascertain within what bounds it shall be confined?*

By some, every part and parcel of the Old Testament is regarded as capable of a double sense; and consequently, whenever it becomes in their view desirable, on any account, to resort to such a sense, they hold themselves at liberty to do so. Nor have such views always been confined to minds of the lower order, or to men of little knowledge. Origen, who believed in the eternity of matter, interpreted the first chapter of Genesis as having an occult moral or spiritual sense throughout. The waters of the firmament above were the good thoughts and desires of

men; those in the depths below, the bad ones. The history of the temptation and fall of Adam and Eve he regarded as an allegory, in order to set forth the power of sin. Even so the history of Sarah and Hagar. The Mosaic ritual was never intended to be taught as a literal and historic reality, but in all its parts it must be regarded as conveying an occult sense. Of course all other parts of the Scripture may be subjected to a similar process; but more especially the Canticles. Origen, moreover, has had many followers, both in ancient and modern times. Who has not heard, too, of Cocceius, in recent times, who, with much more learning than Origen, and with equal strength of fancy, outdid his illustrious predecessor? The piety and learning, which were united in Cocceius, have given great authority to his exegesis; and throughout all Protestant Christendom, even down to the present hour, there are followers of his mode of interpretation to be found, although with great varieties both in the theory and practice of expounding.

In the Roman Catholic church the practice of *spiritualizing*, (as the developing of a double sense is called), has been even more general and more unlimited than among the Protestants. The Jesuit, who found that the account of the creation of "the sun to rule the day, and of the moon and stars to rule the night," in the first chapter of Genesis, was intended, mystically and in the way of *ὑπόνοια*, to teach the supremacy of the Pope and the inferiority of kings and cardinals, was merely a specimen of what has been very common in that church. But who among all the Protestant mystical interpreters can refute the Jesuit? I know of no argument that can reach him, when *ὑπόνοια* in the Scriptures is once fairly and fully conceded. He has as good a right to say, that Gen. 1: 16 was designed to convey an *occult* sense, as such Protestants have to aver, that

Ps. II. XXII. XLV. CX. and other parts of Scripture have a double sense. Who is, or can be, the final arbiter in such cases?

Once admit that an occult or mystic second sense may be given to any passage of Scripture, and you must of course concede to every man the liberty of foisting in upon the Scriptures such a meaning, whenever and wherever he pleases. If he is abundant and excessive in his phantasies, it would be difficult to say by what court he is to be tried; much more difficult to point out the authority which has a right to pass final sentence of condemnation. In a cause to be tried, where there is neither statute nor common law to guide, and where every man has the right to do what seems good in his own sight, a court must be somewhat puzzled in making out a final and authoritative decision.

You smile when one tells you of the Jesuit, who preached seven sermons from the interjection *O!* yet nothing more was necessary even to double this number, than a lively fancy, and the power of spiritualizing with such vigour as to make out a variety of meanings for the said interjection. You smile perhaps still more, when one tells you of the preacher, who selected Cant. 1: 9 for his text, (in which the bride is compared to the horses in Pharaoh's chariot), and drew from its *occult* meanings eighty-two particulars of resemblance between the horses and the church, the last of which was, that as the steeds of Pharaoh moved with a steady pace over both hill and dale, so the church moves with the steady gait of *perseverance* through the wilderness which she is traversing. You will say: "This is excessive; this is ridiculous." But who shall prescribe the bounds of fancy, when she is once authorized to move in any direction she pleases? If you should suggest that, at least, imagination must be bound by the principle of producing



something *useful*, in such a development of *occult* meanings; one might reply by asking: How can you show that the seven sermons of the Jesuit were not all useful sermons? Certainly they may have been so. And as to the expatiator upon the points of resemblance between Pharaoh's horses and the church, at most we cannot, on your ground, condemn him unheard. If all his points of likeness were as well chosen as the last, he surely might have important subjects before him for discussion; and who can aver, that he did not gravely and profitably discuss them? ✓

Indeed this plea of converting the Old Testament in particular to *useful* purposes, proffered by Origen and in vogue more or less since his time, may be urged on to any extent that fancy or imagination may judge best. Who that is familiar with the history of interpretation does not know that many a grave interpreter has spent much time and pains in analyzing the *proper names* of Scripture, in order to evoke from them some mysterious spirit with a message from a *terra incognita*? It is thus, according to the view of such expositors, that the Scriptures become *edifying*; thus that every part of the Old Testament becomes lighted up, as it were, with the lamp of gospel truth. On this ground, also, any man who understands Hebrew as well as Cocceius did, (and truly he was no ordinary adept), may make the first chapter of the first book of Chronicles as *edifying* as the 19th Psalm, or equally didactic with the Sermon on the Mount. In the first verse of the Chronicles, the name *Adam* might suggest, not unnaturally, the whole history of the race of man, with all their attributes, powers, developments, and destiny. *Seth*, (i. e. שֵׁט from שָׂיַת to *put, place, substitute*, etc.), naturally suggests the great Redeemer of men, who was *put* in our place, or *substituted* for us, i. e. "he was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities;" and so the whole doctrine of the vicarious

sufferings of Christ is suggested to our consideration by the name *Seth*. *Enosh* (עֲנוֹשׁ from עָנָה *to be sick*) of course teaches us the doctrine of man's frail and dying state; and by indirect consequence it reminds us of all the duties which are attendant upon such a state and naturally connected with it—a text, therefore, of vast meaning, even of boundless import. And so we might pass on through all the genealogical tables in the first book of the Chronicles; which, when thus treated, instead of being mere genealogies in which the church has now no very special interest, would then become pregnant with a divine and transcendental meaning, and be filled, as one might almost say, “with the fulness of God.” In this way, too, we can demonstrate, that all Scripture is *profitable for doctrine and for instruction in righteousness*. Who then can forbid us to engage in such an excellent work as this? Who can bid us to stop, when thus bending all our powers to vindicate the divine authority and excellence of the Scriptures, and to show that no other book on earth can bear comparison with them, as to adaptedness for conveying, at all times and in every possible manner, both doctrine and practical instruction? Even the least important part of them, (if indeed it is lawful to say that any one part is less important than another), has more of significance, more that is adapted to our edification, than all the other books which the world contains.

If now to all this I should add large professions of most sincere and ardent desires to glorify God by such a view of the Scriptures, and to convince men how he has indeed “magnified his word above all his name;” if I should, at the same time, bestow degrading epithets on all those who deny the supernatural fulness of meaning and the secondary and spiritual sense of the Scriptures, and insert in every convenient place an *inuendo* that they are fast verging

toward rationalism; should I not secure an attentive hearing of many, yea very many, among both laity and clergy? This, or something of much the same tenor, has often been done; it doubtless will be often repeated in future time. Nor is the man who does this, at all within the grasp of his mystic brethren, who call themselves more sober. There is, as we have seen, no court of appeal. And the man who outgoes all his competitors in the extension of the spiritual or occult sense of the Scriptures, provided the meanings which he gives may tend to *edification*, is of course entitled to a *precedence* in the great and good work (as many deem it) of rendering the Bible *edifying* every where and to the highest degree; and all this, too, in such a way as to show that it is a book unlike all other books, and has a fulness of doctrine and instruction which are worthy of a God, and which God only could impart to it. On the ground of double or occult sense, the right of such a man to this claim cannot be disproved.

The advocates for a double sense or *spiritualizing* will doubtless reply to all this, that 'the *abuse* of a thing is no good argument against the *use* of it.' In most cases this is certainly to be conceded. But if a thing is of such a nature that it is all abuse, and must be so, it is a good argument against it. Of such a nature I must believe the practice of mystical interpreters to be. John Bunyan was a man who did not lack genius or piety. Yet he has given to the world a treatise in which he undertakes to show, that not only the temple with its solemn ritual and impressive service was significant of good things to come, but that the parts all and singular of the same were in like manner significant. The vases, the censers, the trays, the snuffers, yea the snuff itself of the lamps—all, all had an important *spiritual* meaning. Will you say, that Bunyan was *dreaming* a second time here, to much less purpose than his first

dream which has rendered him immortal? If you do, it were easy to refer you to Origen, to Jerome even, to Augustine, to Cocceius, to Jones of Nayland, and to a host of other men distinguished for talents and piety, who have wandered scarcely less into *dreaming* regions than Bunyan. When we are gravely told, in many a Commentary, that in the parable of the good Samaritan, the man that travelled from Jerusalem to Jericho through the wilderness, and fell among thieves and was robbed and wounded, represents Adam and his posterity travelling through the wilderness of this world and robbed and wounded by Satan; that the priest and Levite, who passed by without helping him, represent the law which cannot save the sinner and good works and ceremonial observances which cannot help him; that the good Samaritan is Christ; that the oil and wine are the forgiveness and grace of the gospel; and that the gratuitous work of helping the wounded man is a lively emblem of the Redeemer's gratuitous work in respect to sinners—all this, we are gravely assured, is *edifying*, it makes the Scriptures profitable for doctrine, and consequently no valid objection can be made against it. Be it so then; but why stop here? Why choose out those parts of the parable which may afford room for tracing imaginary resemblances, and leave the rest as being of no important significance? What means the setting of the wounded man upon the ass; the bringing him to an inn; the two pence given to the host; the promise of more on the return of the Samaritan? By what rule or principle does the interpreter stop short of these, and leave them out of the category of "things profitable for doctrine?" Is it not the *useful*, the *edifying*, which makes this mode of spiritualizing lawful? If so, then we may vindicate those, who out of *Adam*, *Seth*, *Enosh*, (1 Chron. 1: 1), bring out the greatest and most important of all gospel-truths and



the most important of all the precepts of practical piety. In my apprehension, at least, the latter have as good a claim to our confidence as the interpreters of the parable of the good Samaritan.

We have heard of a preacher, who selected from Ezra 1: 9 the clause *nine and twenty knives*, for a text. How he made this profitable for *doctrine*, we are not told. We have read of still more extraordinary *spiritualizing*. The fact to which we refer is briefly this: in Gen. 29: 2 it is said, that Jacob "looked, and behold a well in the field." The spiritual instruction, or rather *consolation*, deducible from this was expressed by the preaching interpreter in the following pathetic exclamation: "What a mercy that the field was not in the well!"

But enough of examples. And if I am again told, as I doubtless shall be, that these only serve to expose the abuse of the *ἐπινόια*; I must again reply by asking the advocate of the principle in question to point me to the tribunal, which decides, or has authority to decide, where the *limits* of such a practice must be drawn.

Once more; I am not able to satisfy my own mind, why merely a *double* sense should be assigned to various passages of Scripture. Why not three, seven, ten, or (with the Jewish Rabbies) forty-nine senses? Fancy can make out all these, with little or no difficulty. Why not give to the Scripture, as Cocceius maintained we should do, *all* the meanings of which it is in any way capable of bearing?

The only pertinent answer that can be made to this is, that it is not usual, even where fancy is permitted to play a conspicuous part in the interpretation of ambiguous sayings, to make out more than a *double* sense; consequently it would be against usage to assign so many meanings to the Scripture. But this answer will hardly suffice. It is not usual, in respect to any grave and honest discourse, to

make out more than *one* meaning to words; but the advocates of double sense have brought us into company with the interpreters of enigmas, charades, conundrums, and heathen oracles of *double entendre*, and invited us to keep pace with them. If we must do so, then why may we not at least make out this distinctive claim for the Scriptures, viz. that their superiority to every thing of such an equivocal nature is manifest, by the fact that the language of the inspired books is capable of bearing all possible senses, be they more or less? If the divine origin of the Bible cannot be proved in this manner, it must be conceded that we may at least show, in such a way, that it is a book different from all others which the world contains.

Let me add, in the fifth place, that *the mode of interpretation against which I am contending, can never be relied on for the establishment of any scriptural doctrine or precept.*

Few, if any, of the advocates of double sense will venture to assert, that we can depend on an occult sense to establish any position of importance. The most that is usually claimed for this method of interpretation is, that it pleases the fancy, excites and gratifies the imagination, and thus makes the truth more agreeable to many minds. Yet the occult meaning, in order to have any degree of confidence reposed in it, must harmonize with those texts of Scripture which are plain and direct. Indeed, the bare statement of the whole matter affords evidence enough, that we can never pretend to rely on an occult meaning as the foundation of an *argument*, by which any, even the least important, position is established. The simple question is, then, whether we shall resort to allegorizing or spiritualizing, merely to gratify the fancy, or amuse the imagination, or to allure by ingenuity in drawing supposed resemblances. But on this question why should there be any doubt? The Bible is a book of import much too

grave to be treated in this manner. God, and heaven, and hell, and never-dying souls, are no originals for fancy pictures and amusing sketches. It is a degradation of the awful majesty of Scripture to treat it in this way. Were I to speak what my feelings prompt me to do, I should say, that it is a profanation of its holy contents. Where romance and fiction and conceit and conjecture and enigma are all to be mixed up with instruction of the most serious and important character which can be addressed to human beings, what mind that possesses a refined taste and delicate sensibility will not be revolted and displeased with such a procedure?

I repeat what has been already said: *When God speaks to men, he speaks more humano by men and for men.* Viewed in this light, the poetry of the Scriptures is poetry with all its characteristics; the prose is prose; the genealogies are what they purport to be; the historic narrations are histories; the psalms are songs of praise; the proverbs are maxims or apothegms; the plans of the tabernacle and temple, with all their apparatus, are plans for building sanctuaries and furnishing them; prophecy is prediction; preaching is homiletic; allegory is allegory, and parable is parable. If there be any thing that is certain, as to the general principles of interpretation respecting the Scriptures, all this is certain. If the Bible is not to be interpreted in such a manner, i. e. in accordance with these positions, then we must give up all hope of coming to the knowledge of any rules by which it can be interpreted. ✓

It is well that the public taste is at last putting its hand more and more upon the extravagance of days that are past, in respect to the occult sense of many portions of the Scriptures. But in the department of prophecy, with which I am particularly concerned at present, there is yet great latitude given and taken in regard to this matter. In the

✓ Psalms, and indeed in a multitude of passages in the Prophets, the Pentateuch, and all parts of the Scripture, there are expositors even now who defend the *ὑπόνοια*, i. e. they find a literal and historic sense which answered in former days a *temporary* purpose, and also an occult sense, wrapped up or involved in the drapery of the historic sense, and discernible only when this is unrolled and laid aside. They are serious in the belief, that they have a right to interpret in this manner; and although few will venture to meet a discussion of the subject on the ground of simple hermeneutics, (for on this ground their cause must surely fail), yet they appeal, one and all, to the usage and authority of the New Testament writers, and aver, that whatever difficulties may be made out on the grounds of hermeneutical science, as applicable to writings merely of human origin, yet it is clear that the Evangelists and other writers of the New Testament did admit and adopt a double sense of the Hebrew Scriptures, and, consequently, we are at liberty to do the same.

This for substance has been so long and so often alleged, in the way of defending the occult sense of the Old Testament Scriptures, and it is moreover, apparently, so weighty an argument in its favor, that I must of necessity take it into serious consideration.

I might remark, at the outset, that were the facts true, in the sense in which they are usually alleged, it would not follow of course, that *we* are entitled to assign an occult sense to any and every passage of Scripture, where we may merely of ourselves think it proper to do so. We take the ground that the New Testament writers were *inspired*; and if they were, then it is possible that they might be enlightened by inspiration so as to give a meaning to some parts of the Old Testament Scripture, which is and must be occult in itself to all who are uninspired. We may in-



deed now follow in their steps, in those cases where they have given us an occult sense; we may give credit to their *authority*, and so trust them as our guides; but we can go, in such a case, no further than they lead the way. Inspiration was necessary to reveal an occult sense to them; and as we are not inspired, so we cannot give the occult sense of passages which they have not explained. In the case supposed, it was not fancy, imagination, conceit, which led them to play upon words and to give to them mysterious and conjectural meanings. If they have actually exhibited the occult sense in any case, it must of course have been by virtue of light from above.

It would be gaining not a little, if even so much should be admitted by all. We should then, at least, be kept within bounds very narrow in comparison with those which many interpreters have set up. One simple rule would suffice; and this would be, that we must merely follow on in the same path in which the New Testament writers have taken the lead, and not strike out new ways or by-paths for ourselves.

But a more important view of this subject remains to be taken: *Have the New Testament writers made out, in any case, a DOUBLE sense to the words of the Old Testament Scriptures?*

A moderate volume could be easily filled with the discussion of this question; but necessity obliges me to comprise what I now have to say in a few paragraphs.

I do not find but *two* ways in which the Jewish Scriptures are employed in the New Testament, so far as the subject of prediction or prophecy is concerned. The first is too plain to need any particular comment; it is where a passage in the Old Testament is simply and directly prophetic, and is appealed to or is cited as merely prophetic. Such are the passages, as I must believe, cited from Is.

✓ LIII. Ps. II. XVI. XXII. XLV. CX., and many other places. We need not, with Cocceius, bishop Horne, and other writers of this description, find Christ *every where* in the Old Testament; nor need we, as has been said of Grotius, come to the conclusion that he is to be found *no where* in it. There is some middle path between these extremes. If the Old Testament Scriptures have not predicted a Messiah, and have not indeed often predicted him, then the persuasion and the reasoning of Christ and his apostles, in respect to this subject, have no good foundation on which they can rest. If they have foretold a Messiah, why not leave them to speak out this great truth plainly, simply, without any *ὑπόνοια* or occult sense? For example; why, in the second and 45th Psalms, should we suppose the coronation of David and the marriage of Solomon to be described or sung, by the first and literal sense of the words, and then that the Messiah is obscurely hinted at in the way of an occult sense? Is not one greater than David to be found in the second Psalm, and greater than Solomon in the forty-fifth? So I must think. David was not crowned king on the holy hill of Zion; nor was he begotten of God on the day of coronation; nor had he the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession; nor were his enemies broken in pieces like a potter's vessel; nor are all men invited to put their trust in him. Solomon was not most mighty in war; nor did his right hand teach terrible things; nor was his throne for ever and ever; nor was he addressed by the title *God* (אֱלֹהִים); nor did his children become princes in all the earth; nor are all people exhorted to praise him forever and ever. Truly a greater than David or Solomon is here. No double sense is needed; none is even admissible. What advantage, in any respect, can be gained by the admission of one?

✓ All that can with strict propriety be said of these, and

of many other like cases, is simply, that the sacred writers of ancient times, when they come to disclose a future king Messiah and his extended and peaceful reign, borrow the costume of their picture from objects then before their own minds and those of their readers. From David and Solomon traits of resemblance are borrowed, in order to complete the sketch of a future and spiritual king. Not mere choice, but absolute necessity dictated this. How could the future be disclosed, except by language borrowed from that in present use, and by likenesses drawn from present objects? It is surely no good reason for finding a double sense, that a prophet has undertaken to disclose the future, by presenting it through similitudes of the present? ✓

This leads me to consider a second method in which the New Testament writers have cited and employed the language of the Old Testament, viz. *by suggesting resemblances between past and future events.* ✓

This includes all which is properly called *type* in the Old Testament. Type means a resemblance of two *things*, not an occult sense of words. The epistle to the Hebrews has shown us, that many things under the old dispensation were, and were designed to be, *typical*, i. e. they bore a resemblance to objects or transactions of the new dispensation. It is through the medium of this epistle that we come more fully to learn, that many of the Jewish religious rites were typical. Indeed, we cannot well conceive how it should be otherwise. God has no pleasure in rites, forms, ceremonies, and sacrifices, in themselves considered, and for their own sake. To be worthy of him, they must shadow forth something of the future and Messianic dispensation. Thus the paschal-lamb was a type of the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world; the office of the high-priest was typical of the atoning and propitiatory office of Christ; and the like as to many other things. ✓

✓ But in all these cases, and in all like to them, there is nothing of a double sense to words. The *words* which describe the rites, sacrifices, or occurrences, of the ancient dispensation, are to be interpreted in their plain, usual, historical sense; for example, the institution of the passover in Ex. XII. When this is done, an interpreter, so far as the exegesis of mere language is concerned, has fully discharged his duty. ✓ But another question may arise, subsequent to this, viz., Whether the *things* thus described do not afford resemblances of future things under the new dispensation? Christ and the apostles have decided that they do; and even more than this is apparently decided, for they seem plainly to teach us, that many of the ancient rites, and transactions, and persons also, *were designed to be types of good things to come*. It is this which makes them truly types. Surely it is not every resemblance which fancy can draw, between an earlier and later occurrence or personage, that constitutes a type in a true and scriptural sense. We must limit types of this character only to such things or persons, as were designed to afford resemblances that might convey instruction to the ancient church. 2

✓ Will any one, who believes in the divine authority of the New Testament, call in question the fact, that the paschal lamb, the Jewish sacrifices at large, the high-priest's office, and other things of the like nature, were designedly emblems of the future? If any do question this, I am not among the number. But then, in all these cases of types, there is only an *emblem* of the future, or a *resemblance* of something future, in the *things* or *persons* of ancient days, and no second sense to words which describe those things. If, moreover, the Jewish dispensation was designed to be *preparatory* to the Christian one, what less could be rationally expected than that there would be such a significance in many of its institutions? d



On the same ground, for substance, we may place a class of texts cited in the New Testament, which have generally been regarded as the most difficult of all. Let us select an example which comprises in itself all the serious difficulties that can attend the subject, in any part of the New Testament. In Matt. 2: 15, the writer refers to the flight of Joseph and Mary with the infant Jesus to Egypt, and their subsequent departure from that country in order to go again to Palestine. He appeals, for confirmation of the fact that all these arrangements were under the guidance of a superintending power, to a passage in Hosea 11: 1, which says: "When Israel was a child I loved him, and called my Son out of Egypt." As written by the prophet this is no part of a *prediction*, and is not designed to be one, but it is a simple declaration of a historical truth. Yet the Evangelist says, that when Jesus went down to Egypt, and was to be recalled from that country, that all this was a *fulfilment* (πλήρωσις) of what the prophet Hosea had said, in the passage just quoted. What then are the elements of this case, and of all others like to it? Simply these; viz., that something transacted, done, performed in former days, or any event that happened, if they found an antitype or corresponding resemblance under the new dispensation, might be said to have a πλήρωσις, i. e. a fulfilment. But who that ever has studied the New Testament references to the ancient Scriptures, does not know that the words *fulfilment* and *fulfil* have a wide latitude of meaning? Any thing which happened or was done in ancient times, and which for substance is repeated or takes place again under the new dispensation; any thing later which presents a lively resemblance to another and earlier thing; may be, and often is, spoken of as a πλήρωσις of that earlier thing. It matters not, now, whether the word by critical

and classical usage would bear this latitude of sense. Enough that such is New Testament usage.

God often calls ancient Israel his *child*, his *son*, because he was a special object of his love. The Hebrews were exiles in the land of Egypt, they were delivered from that state by a special providence, and brought to Palestine, the promised land. Jesus, the beloved Son of God in a higher and nobler sense, was an exile in Egypt, he was delivered from this state and brought to Palestine—and all by a special Providence. Angels interposed to accomplish his deliverance. Here then was a case, in which the Son of God in whom he was well pleased was brought to Egypt, and out of Egypt, in a manner not unlike to that recorded in ancient history. What happened in later times, happened in a higher and nobler sense than what happened in early times. And might it not be said, on this account, that there was in this case a *πλήρωσις*? It is said; and why not justly said, and in a way full of meaning?

But even here there is no *occult* sense of words, in the prophet. They are mere plain, simple, historical words. Yet the *events* to which they refer, bear a resemblance to subsequent events under the new dispensation; and on this account the latter are named a *filling up* or *fulfilment* of the former. It is the want of right views as to the use of *πλήρωσις* and *ἐπληρώθη* in the New Testament, which has misled so many interpreters of its quotations.

In a way not unlike to this last method of applying Old Testament Scriptures, we are accustomed continually to quote and apply maxims and sentiments from the classic writers, without ever supposing that the passages which we quote were actual predictions. Like occurrences or exigencies call to mind ancient declarations or narrations respecting similar events or occurrences, and those de-

clarations are therefore cited as applicable to the later events. Thus, to introduce another conspicuous example, the 69th Psalm affords the means of a striking illustration. David here describes, in very vivid colours, the persecution of his enemies, deprecates their malignity, and predicts their overthrow. That his own personal enemies are here meant, and that David in *propria persona* speaks, and for himself, is clear from the tenor of the composition. That David is originally and personally meant, and not Christ, is clear from v. 5. "O God, thou knowest my foolishness, and my sins are not hidden from thee." Could he "who knew no sin" make such a confession? No; here is the proper and original David, and here of course are his personal enemies. Yet in v. 9th we find the expression: "The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up;" and this is applied by the disciples to Jesus, when he drove from the temple the traffickers who profaned it, John 2: 17. So again, in v. 21: "They gave me gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink," which is applied to Jesus in John 19: 28, 29, and probably in Matt. 27: 34, 48 and Mark 15: 23. John intimates, that when the vinegar was given to Jesus on the cross, there was "a fulfilment of the Scriptures." And undoubtedly there was, in the sense already explained. There was an event like to that in ancient times. David's bitter enemies persecuted him to the greatest extremity. They "gave him gall to eat and vinegar to drink;" not in the literal sense, probably, but in the figurative one. But the spiritual David was persecuted more bitterly still, even unto death. Literally even did they give him vinegar to drink mingled with gall, Matt. 27: 34. Here was a *πλήρωσις*, a filling up, a completing in a higher sense than which was done in ancient times. A more important personage was here concerned; and the passage of Scripture in Ps. 69: 21, when applied

to Jesus, stands forth as a most prominent and lively description of his sufferings.

Once more, in respect to this same Psalm; in Romans 11: 19, Paul quotes vs. 22, 23, (with some little variation from the original), and applies them to the state of the Jews in his day, as descriptive of their blindness, stupidity, and unbelief. Literally and originally the descriptions here were applied to David's enemies; but David's Son, who is called *Lord* by his earthly ancestor (Matt. 22: 45), applies them with still greater force to his own enemies.

Nor is even this all the use which is made in the New Testament of this strikingly descriptive Psalm. Peter (Acts 1: 20) applies to Judas the 25th verse: "Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein." He even adds, that the Holy Ghost, by the mouth of David, spake concerning Judas (v. 16), and apparently he means to include verse 25 in what was said; see Acts 1: 20, which begins the quotation with a *γάρ*. In the same breath, Peter quotes another passage from Ps. 109: 9, (which Psalm is altogether of the like tenor with Ps. LIX.), which runs thus: "His bishopric let another man take." The fair question now is: Was Judas originally meant here? The tenor of both Psalms shows clearly that he was not. Yet David, as king, was beyond all reasonable doubt a type of king Messiah; and what is done in respect to the type, may, by the usage of the New Testament writers, be applied to the antitype. The Holy Ghost did truly speak that which is applicable to Judas, or which deeply concerns Judas, inasmuch as he hath, by the mouth of David, spoken what is exactly and highly descriptive of Judas' character and destiny.

In all the New Testament there occur no cases of greater difficulty, than those which have now been brought before the reader's mind. He will bear me witness, then,



that I am not disposed to avoid the question which such passages bring up, nor by any management to keep it out of sight. If he hesitates to explain the New Testament quotations as I have done, I can only solicit him to study thoroughly the whole subject of quotations, and then to take also into view the usual ancient and Jewish method of quoting and applying Scripture, as exhibited in the Mishna, the Gemara, and the writings of the Rabbins. If he does not come to the same conclusion, at last, which I have now developed, I can only say, his views and his modes of reasoning must be exceedingly foreign from those which the great mass of well informed interpreters have of late exhibited.

I can find, then, no warrant in the New Testament for giving a *double* sense to the words of the Old Testament. And if it be a fact, that the apostles have so interpreted the Hebrew Scriptures, it is no warrant for me, or any other uninspired person, to interpret them in such a way, beyond what the apostles have already done. Plainly, a meaning not discoverable by any of the laws or principles of language, (and such surely is the *ὑπόνοια* in question), can be discovered with certainty only by the guidance of inspiration. All short of this must be conjecture merely; and on conjecture we cannot establish either doctrine or prophecy. We wait then for proof, among all the mystic interpreters of former or latter days, of supernatural divine guidance and illumination as to their exegesis. We are aware, that Bengel believed he had found such guidance in respect to the meaning of the beast in the Apocalypse whose number is 666; but we are also aware that his grand climacteric of A. D. 1836 has passed by, without any of the confidently expected events. We are aware that thousands, with incomparably less of piety and learning than John Albert Bengel, have laid claim to the like, and even to greater



disclosures, through the special influence of the Spirit. But we have still to learn, from what quarter credible testimony to such alleged supernatural aid is to come. It is not enough that a man *spiritualizes*; nor even that he is expert and eloquent in spiritualizing. It does not suffice, that he can make the unlearned and the lovers of fancy and romance to stare and wonder at his talent for evoking *spirituality* from any and every part of the Old Testament, and specially from prophecy. It is not enough, that he can look down with scorn on those who make little or no account of claims to such gifts at the present time; or that he contemplates with disdain a want of power to understand the Bible in any other way than through the medium of the *intellect*, and compares such persons with the devils who believe and tremble. All this, and more of the same tenor, has been said so long and so often, that the ear listens to it now only as the usual monotony; and the diligent inquirer, who is resolved to make his way to his own heart through the medium of his intellect, makes up his mind to be included under the category of Intellectualists, whatever may be the loss of popularity which this will occasion him among the Mystics.

With an open face then we ask: Where is the proof, that either prophecy, or any other part of the Old Testament, or of the New, conveys a *double* sense? Where is the authority for deciding what the occult sense is, or must be? Where is the defence for trampling upon the laws of interpretation applicable to all other books, when we come to expound the Scriptures? Where are we, when we once give the rein, without control, to mere fancy and imagination? By what wonder-working process shall we make a genealogical table as significant and doctrinal as the 9th Psalm, or the Sermon on the Mount? By what power of transformation shall the list of furniture for the temple

become as instructive to us as the ten commandments, or as Paul's summaries of Christian morality and piety in his epistles ?

In the name of all that is grave, serious, rational, intellectual, respectful to God's eternal truth, or intelligible in propounding the way of salvation to men, I protest against such an abuse of reason, of the holy Scriptures, and of all the established principles of language. It is not enough that men *mean well*, to entitle them thus to sport with the Bible. That book is no toy for the sport of fancy and caprice. He who is in the proper attitude for hearing an address of the King of kings, is not in a frame of mind to unravel charades, and conundrums, and enigmas which are more skilfully ambiguous than that of *Œdipus*. The Majesty of heaven does not expect trifling with his messages.

Tell me not, I would say again, that the Bible can be rendered more useful, by admitting a second or spiritual sense. Whose office is it to mend what God has done ? To whom does it belong to supply the defects of his revelation ? Who shall decide, that he has not communicated what he meant to communicate, and all that he meant to communicate, by the Scripture interpreted agreeably to the common laws and principles of language and of the human mind in reference to language ? Authority must come from above, in order to entitle any man to undertake this. And as to those who do undertake it—what is their rule or limit ? The more sober among them dare not venture to make an *occult* sense out of a passage, which may serve as the *basis* of a single doctrine or precept. The analogy of plain Scripture must come in aid of the second sense, before they can even venture upon it. Of what use then can all this spiritualizing and allegorizing be to the church ? The most to which it can lay claim is, to please the fancy and gratify the imagination. But with what ? Plainly

with the mere ingenuity of the preacher or writer ; for this is all which comes fairly into the account. To aim at making God's word more significant and profitable than he has made it—is not an undertaking in which men should lightly engage.

In whatever light the matter is viewed, it will not bear the test of rigid scrutiny. At all events, let those who have a predominant inclination to this fancy work, go no further than they themselves will venture to maintain that the writers of the New Testament have led them. The ground is too dangerous and uncertain to be occupied an inch beyond this mark, even as the matter appears to them. There is one simple principle that should run through all preaching and all expositions ; which is, that *the mind of the scriptural writer should be given as it was originally expressed by his language*. The *meaning* of any book, is simply what the writer had in his own mind and intended to express. This being given, the work of interpretation is done. For the rest, the process is easy. *Manente ratione manet ipsa lex* includes the whole. So far as our circumstances and relations are like those of the persons to whom the Scriptures were originally addressed, so far what was said to them is binding upon us ; but no farther. It is thus that the Scriptures are indeed profitable for doctrine to all ; for all have the like relations to God, and the like relations to their fellow beings ; and nothing, therefore, in the Bible can be a mere dead letter to us. But to make all parts of the Bible equally significant and instructive, under pretence of piety and spirituality and reverence for the Scriptures—is not this to abuse the gift of reason, and to take away all respect on the part of intelligent men for the advocates of scriptural religion, and to do a violence to the laws of interpretation and to the first principles of language, for which no alleged edification can in any measure

compensate? Nothing short of renewed inspiration can make sure our footing, while standing upon such a ground as this.

I might now quit this topic, were it not that when the subject comes to a point like that which has now been before us, a new direction is given to it, which needs some further attention.

When we say, that the Scriptures mean what the authors of them designed they should mean, we are not unfrequently arrested here by questions such as the following: *Who then is the proper Author of the Scriptures? And if God be that author, by his Spirit, then may we not well suppose that the words of Scripture are more significant than the common laws of language would allow them to be?*

I will not allege, that the subject, as presented by these questions, is attended by no difficulties. Yet it seems to me, after the most careful attention which I have been able to bestow upon it, that these difficulties are not insuperable.

When God speaks to men, in the way of a *revelation*, he speaks by men, and through the medium of human language, or by symbols which are equivalent to language. In either case, the object is to *reveal* something, or to *teach* something. We will suppose now that he addresses them "with the language of angels;" what *revelation* is in reality made by the address? Just as much, we may reply, as would be made, should we now address one of our peasants in Hebrew or Arabic; and no more. To speak in an *unknown* language, without interpreting it, or furnishing means to interpret it, is of course making no revelation at all; it is *teaching* nothing.

The Bible furnishes abundant evidence that the real mode of divine revelation is very different from this. To the Hebrews, Hebrew discourse was addressed; to the Jews when speaking Chaldee, Chaldee discourse; to Jews



and Gentiles, when both could read and understand Greek, Greek discourse. Why? For the simple and most cogent of all reasons, viz., that what was revealed might be understood. But if the common laws of interpretation were not applicable to what was said, then of course it could not be understood. But inasmuch as the whole tenor of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures shows that the usual laws of language are observed, we must have some new and special revelation in order to authorize us to believe, that the Bible is to be exempted from these laws. Or if a part is to be interpreted by the usual laws of exegesis, and a part to be exempted from them, who will show us where the line of distinction is to be drawn between these two very diverse portions of the divine word? No one has yet solved this question. The mode of proceeding in respect to the *ὑπόνοια* has been, that every one "has done what was right in his own eyes." But are we indeed left in such a condition as this? Are we, after all, left in the dark; and this too, when we are launched on a boundless ocean without rudder or compass?

There must be some very important purposes to be answered by *occult* Scripture, if it be indeed true that it is in and of itself occult. Most readily do I concede, for my own experience teaches me every day, that many portions of Scripture are in a measure occult to me. But why? Merely because I am not so familiar with the original languages of Scripture and the objects there referred to, that the bare reading or hearing of it will suffice to make me understand it. It is occult to me, merely and only because I am wanting in knowledge appropriate to the right understanding of it. But was it so dark originally, to those who were addressed by the sacred writers? How can we credit this? The prophets were *preachers* in part. Indeed their main business was preaching. *Prediction*, in



the strict sense of the word, belongs to but quite a subordinate part of their works. Was their *preaching* then intelligible? I need not stop to prove this; for the bare statement of the case does of itself make it incontrovertible. God does not mock men by addressing them in an unknown language, and then making them responsible for disobedience to his commands delivered in that language. The preaching of the prophets must have been intelligible to their contemporaries, in the same manner as well-composed gospel-sermons are now intelligible to the great mass of the Christian community among us. It was doubtless true in ancient times, as it is now, that there were some individuals too ignorant to comprehend all which the prophets uttered in their sermons; still it was then as it is now, i. e. the language of preaching must have been intelligible to all intelligent people.

If now we could in all respects place ourselves in the condition of those who were originally addressed by the sacred writers, we should then understand at once nearly every thing in the Scriptures without any difficulty; just as easily as we now understand religious instructions from our pulpits. All the dictionaries, grammars, commentaries, and learned exegetical essays of our libraries might at once be dispensed with; at all events we should need them no more than we need Lowth's English Grammar, and Johnson's Dictionary, in order to understand our common mother tongue.

So far, I think, all my readers will be ready to agree with me. When God addresses men, in order to instruct, or reprove, or console, he will of course speak what is intelligible.

But there is another and somewhat different view, which is sometimes taken of various *predictions* of the Old Testament, and also of the New. This is, as its abettors

allege, that they are, from the nature of the case, not only somewhat obscure, but are in fact, i. e. they were originally, *designed* to be obscure. Not only are many of them clothed in language which is highly figurative, but the diction is even of design enigmatical. God, as it is alleged, had undoubtedly a definite meaning in his own mind, which he attached to the language that was employed, but this meaning was designedly veiled from men in general, and sometimes even from the prophets themselves.

That, when the Holy Spirit inspired the prophets and led them to utter *predictions*, he himself attached a wider and fuller and more definite extent of meaning to the words employed, than the prophets did or could, I cannot doubt. *All* the future was perfectly known to the Spirit of God. It is, indeed, an easy matter to illustrate this. When Newton or La Place used the word *sun*, it recalled to their minds all the astronomical views of that luminary which they had acquired by study; while the peasant, who employs the same word, means only the apparent luminary of the skies which rises and sets and scatters light and warmth over all the earth. But if Newton or La Place were to converse with any persons destitute of astronomical knowledge, they would of course employ the word *sun* only in a sense intelligible to them. On any other ground they could not expect to be understood.

Like to this, now, must be the case in regard to *prophetic revelation*. If God *reveals* the future to men, then he must speak so as to be understood. The *things* suggested by the words employed, are, beyond all question, understood by him incomparably better than they can be by men. But the question before us is, not what knowledge God *possesses*, but what has he designed to *reveal*? Now if he employs words as the medium of a revelation respecting the future, then those words are to be interpre-

ted by the ordinary rules of language, or else there is of course no revelation made by them. An occult sense here is of course no sense at all.

Put the case now, for example, that Rev. XII. was unintelligible to those whom John addressed, and of course is so to us; then what was the object in writing Rev. XII.? Certainly not to *reveal* any thing to the church then, or since; for, on the ground taken, nothing is revealed. Of what use then are such *predictions*, (if we may apply such a misnomer to them), to the church of Christ? Surely they can have been of no use, thus far. For what purpose then was the Apocalypse written? If we may follow the suggestions of the book, in all parts of it, it was written to encourage and console Christians in the midst of severe trials and fiery persecutions—to console them with the certain prospect of the triumphs of the church over all her enemies. But what consolation or what instruction could be derived from those parts of the book, which were intelligible neither to John himself, nor to any of his readers? None—none! What shall we say then? Has God spoken for no purpose? Or has he spoken for a particular purpose, and yet in such a way as not at all to answer that purpose? I cannot venture on such positions.

But here the subject is wont to take a new turn, which leads us to the second topic proposed for discussion.

### § 3. PROPHECY NOT INTELLIGIBLE UNTIL IT IS FULFILLED. ✓

There are not a few prophecies respecting which we are told, that *God has a meaning which is attached to the language employed, although it has not yet been developed. When the events come to pass to which the prophecy relates, then, and not till then, shall we be able to understand the words of the prediction.* ✓

✓ I have found this sentiment echoed and re-echoed so often among expositors of the prophecies, even by such enlightened men as Hengstenburg, and Tholuck too, that I have been forced upon an examination of its claims to our credit. It has become, with many, a kind of universal menstruum, in which all the difficulties of the prophecies are solved. When we get to the utmost limits of our knowledge respecting them, then we are warned to include all the rest within the domain of hallowed secrecy. In fact, some even lay claim to credit for piety, in such an unreserved submission, as they deem it, to the divine will. Happy do some count the lot of those, who merely wonder, in such cases, at "the ways of God which are past finding out." How comfortable moreover it is, when we can not only cover over the faults of our imperfect knowledge in a way so creditable, but also dispense with all future effort and trouble, which would result from pursuing inquiries into the dark domains of the Scripture!

✓ All the attention which I have bestowed on these views, so common among one class of interpreters, has never enabled me to see or feel the justice or propriety of them. Let us now suppose a case for the sake of illustration. John, we will say, has uttered many things in the Apocalypse, which will never be understood until they are fulfilled. Let it be then, that 2000 years after he has written his book those things are to be fulfilled. The first question that we naturally ask, is: To what purpose did John write those predictions? During 2000 years they have been or will be, by concession, neither more nor less than a dead letter. The church is neither admonished, nor instructed, nor comforted. Why then were they written? Was it to show that God can move in a mysterious way, and shroud himself in clouds and darkness? There is proof enough of this in every quarter of his works, without



a resort to such means. All heaven and earth bear witness that his ways are often past finding out. And would he resort, then, for the sake of making this impression, to such means as those now under consideration? The suggestion seems derogatory to his majesty and dignity. To make a *revelation*—and yet that revelation (so called) be entirely *unintelligible*? How can we conceive of his sporting with the hopes and expectations of men in such a way? To make one, moreover, which for thousands of years remains a perfect enigma to his church—is this any relief of the difficulty? To my own mind, at least, it is none at all.

But this is not the end of the matter. There is a still more serious difficulty to be met. We are told that ‘the prophecy will be understood then, and only then, *when the thing predicted comes to pass.*’ What then is the thing which comes to pass? I may surely be permitted to ask this question. What is the *thing predicted*? It is conceded, that by the laws of language no proper meaning has been, or can be, made out from the prophecy in question. But after 2000 years, something will take place, it is said, to which we may apply it. Apply *what*? If an *event* is compared with a *prophecy*, the only means of comparison possible, is, that we first assign some definite meaning to the prophecy, and then compare the event with that meaning. If this be not the case, then we merely make a comparison of a *known* thing with one that is *unknown*. How then are we to ascertain that they agree, when we confess that one of the two things compared, is (so to speak) an *unknown* quantity? So long as it is unknown, or treated as unknown, we can have no means of ascertaining whether there is an agreement, or not, in the case supposed.

Is not this whole matter, moreover, mere reasoning in a circle? The prophecy (an unknown something) agrees



with the event, because the event agrees with the prophecy ! Some laws of language then, after all, must first be applied to the prophecy, in order to make out any definite meaning ; and if so, why could not these have been applied at a period antecedent, as well as now ? It seems impossible to vindicate with success any such method of reasoning—such a complete *ὑστέρων πρότερον* as this. A prophecy, unintelligible by the laws of language, can never be a *revelation* ; nor can there ever be any certainty among uninspired men, that it is truly and correctly understood.

It would not be proper, however, to dismiss this topic without some additional remarks, which may aid us in explaining the ground, why the principle in question has been so extensively admitted, among many interpreters whose piety and learning cannot well be called in question.

*Words* are the signs of *things*. Words, as originally employed by a writer or speaker, designate the view of things which exists in his own mind. But it must be remembered, that words, which have been formed by men whose knowledge is imperfect, (and all words are so formed), cannot, from the nature of the case in many instances, convey complete or perfect ideas or make complete representations of many things. The reason is, that there is much belonging to most objects of which men speak, which is not understood or known by them ; and what is unknown they do not, and cannot, definitely describe. For example ; the words *God, heaven, hell, soul*, etc., while they convey the definite ideas that men have concerning these respective objects, yet they do not convey to our minds any description of that which is unknown to us, but which at the same time belongs to these objects. There may be then, and in respect to most objects there are, many things appertaining, which no human language describes, or can describe ; and this for the simple reason,

that language is employed to describe *what we do know*, or *suppose ourselves to know*, and not to describe that of which we have no knowledge or conception.

It does not make against this view of the subject at all, that there are many words which stand as signs of things which are for the most part unknown to us. For example; the word *gravity*, or the phrase *power of gravity*, designates a something in the earth and planets which attracts material objects toward them, while, at the same time, we pretend to no knowledge of the real nature, attributes, place, manner of existence, etc., of that something, only so far as the attraction just mentioned develops them. After all, then, the words *gravity*, or *power of gravity*, designate only so much of that something as we know, or at least suppose ourselves to know.

So in many other cases; we see developments of powers or of substances, (as we suppose them to be), which afford us but some twilight-rays to aid us in the cognizance of those substances and powers themselves. For example; *electricity*, *magnetism*, and *light*, are words that convey ideas to our minds which are definite to a certain extent. But beyond this they designate nothing specific. If these words are still employed by any one in order to designate a supposed something beyond our knowledge, they are, if I may so speak, like some exponents in algebra, the mere signs of a quantity unknown.

But we will suppose now, that some being who has a perfect acquaintance with the substances named, employs the same words to designate them. To these words he may affix a meaning, of course, that corresponds with the extent of his knowledge. But he cannot expect others, possessed of only an imperfect knowledge, to understand the words in all respects as he does.

We will admit now that God, if we may (with rever-

ence) suppose him to employ human language, having a perfect knowledge of all things, may connect with that language many ideas unknown to us, and in our present state not knowable to us. Still, what God knows in and of himself, is one thing; what he reveals, or designs to reveal, is quite another. Surely no one will say, that God undertakes to reveal to us that which we are incapable of knowing. To suppose this, would be virtually to impeach his wisdom, his paternal care, and even his perfect knowledge. When God speaks to men, it is that he may be understood by them; for on any other ground he does *not* truly *speak* to them.

It is not then *all* which is in his mind, that the words of Scripture are intended to designate. It is only so much as may be *revealed*; and if revealed by words, then those words must bear the sense which the *usus loquendi* gives them, or else no revelation is made by them.

When predictions of future and distant events are uttered, no words, it will be admitted, can of themselves describe all which appertains to those events. God indeed knows all; but he does not communicate, nor does he design to communicate, all his knowledge to men. To assume that a prophecy is designed to reveal all which the divine mind knows respecting the event predicted, is such an assumption as no reason nor laws of language can justify.

The question then comes fairly before us: How much does the Holy Spirit mean to convey, by the words of any particular prophecy? The answer is not difficult. God speaks by men, and for men. The prophets were inspired by the Holy Ghost. But why? In order that they might with certainty and authority *give information* respecting things past, present, or future. To *give information* necessarily presupposes, that they themselves possessed it.

If the Holy Spirit employs such a medium of communication, i. e. speaks through prophets, it is plainly in order that *human* language may be addressed to *human* beings. The language employed, therefore, means just what the writers designed it should mean. *Every book is fully interpreted, when the exact mind of the writer is unfolded.*

Were the prophets then omniscient, even when inspired? Plainly not. The Bible is full of evidence, that inspiration teaches only what pertains to religious truth and duty, not the arts and sciences. And even religious truth is not taught in a manner absolutely complete and perfect, but only relatively so. In our present state, we can only "know in part, and believe in part." "We see through a glass darkly." All that is now needed by us is revealed. So much, therefore, the prophets understood. But if they uttered words as mere *automata*, which they did not themselves understand, then they neither received nor imparted any *revelation*. What is unknown and not knowable, is surely no revelation.

I am well aware that I shall be met here with the allegation, that the Scriptures often represent the prophets as not understanding what they uttered, and therefore the meaning of their language, it is said, cannot be limited to what *they* meant to say. But although this has been often and confidently affirmed, I have never been able to satisfy myself that it is correct. The case of speaking in *unknown* tongues, as set forth in 1 Cor. xiv, is appealed to as conclusive in favor of the position just mentioned. But this will not sustain the appeal. In 1 Cor. 14: 4, "Paul tells us, that "he who speaketh in an unknown tongue, *edifieth himself*." If so, then surely he must himself understand what he says; for the same apostle tells us, that there is no edification in that which is not understood.

An appeal is also made to 1 Pet. 1: 11, 12, as declaring



that the prophets made diligent search, in order to understand what they themselves uttered. But I can find no such sentiment there. Peter says, first, that they prophesied respecting the gracious dispensation of the gospel; secondly, that "they searched what, and what manner of time (*εἰς τίνα ἢ πόσον καιρόν*) the things would take place, which were the subject of revelation," i. e. when Christ would appear, and what would be the form and manner of his dispensation; thirdly, that in answer to their inquiries it was revealed to them, that only the distant future would be the period of development. In all this there is nothing which declares or even intimates, that the prophets did not understand what they had uttered. The passage only shows, that they were anxious to know the *time* and *manner* of the new dispensation. These, at first, were not revealed; and even afterwards, only so much was disclosed as enabled them to see, that a distant period was reserved for the Messianic development, so that it could not take place in their day.

In the books of Daniel, of Zechariah, and of Revelation, which are full of *symbols*, the case not unfrequently occurs, where the prophet does not at first know the meaning of the symbols. Nothing could be more natural than this. But in each of these books, be it well remembered, the prophet is represented as being accompanied by his *angel-interpreter*, who explains what was obscure in the symbol. Why this? Why was not the symbol left for *future* explanation, to be made at some distant period?

In one case, Dan. 12: 8, the prophet declares that "he heard and understood not." But to what does this relate? Evidently to what was suggested to his mind by the declarations in v. 7, where it is said, that the *end of the wonders* shall be "after a time, times, and a half," subsequent to the complete scattering of the holy people. Daniel now

does not inquire, like the angel in v. 6, *how long* it shall be to the end of the wonders named, but he asks *what the end of those things would be*, i. e. to what state or condition of things they will lead, or, in other words, what will be the sequel. That such is the meaning of his question, is evident from the nature of the answer given to it by the angel, in vs. 9—13. The declaration of Daniel, then, has respect only to consequences connected with the events predicted. So extraordinary were the events, that he was astonished at them and filled with wonder. Very naturally does he say, therefore, that he does not know what they can mean; a declaration the like of which we are always prone to make, whenever any thing extraordinary fills us with consternation and surprise.

These are the most striking examples to which appeal is made, in order to show that the prophets were sometimes themselves ignorant of what they uttered. I am not able to see, how any sound argument can be built upon them. The prophets might be, and very often were, ignorant of either the time, or the manner, or the circumstances, or the consequences, etc., of things or events which they predicted. No one can for a moment doubt this; for almost all prophecies are the mere *outlines* of future occurrences, not minute likenesses. With the exception of some two or three passages, even the Messianic prophecies in general are of this character. How then can we reasonably suppose, that more was revealed to the prophets than they have expressed? I know of no proof that can be adduced, which will show that they professed any more knowledge of such events than they have developed. To attribute to the prophets all the knowledge of the gospel-dispensation which may now be acquired, would not be walking in the path in which Jesus led the way, when he declared, in reference to the ancient dispensation: "No man hath seen

God at any time; the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath revealed him, John 1: 18. Nor would it be giving due heed to the declaration of Paul (2 Tim. 1: 10), who says, that "life and immortality are brought to light through the gospel." And if the prophets themselves possessed only a partial knowledge of the things in question, even when inspired, surely it was not designed that those to whom they originally addressed the prophecies should be more enlightened than their inspired teachers. What the prophets did know, they have communicated; and they have done in this case the same thing which they have done in all other cases, where they have made any revelation, i. e. they have spoken in an intelligible manner what they designed to speak.

To say that many things are dark to us which they have uttered, is only alleging our own ignorance, and is not, and cannot be, any proof that they did not speak intelligibly to their contemporaries. To say that we may now understand, better than they did, the *things* or *occurrences* which they predicted, is saying nothing to the present purpose. It is beyond all doubt true, that the man who visits London can better understand a description of that metropolis, than one who never saw it. It is beyond a doubt true, that, had we been present at any of the scenes recorded in ancient or in modern history, we could enter with more interest and intelligence into the meaning of faithful narratives respecting them. But subsequent knowledge, acquired by readers at the time when events predicted are or have been developed, although it may greatly aid them in readily understanding the predictions, can never be the rule of exegesis. Any writing means that, and only that, which the author designed it should mean. If the author of any prophecy, then, had a meaning, (and who will deny this), we cannot help believing that he designed to impart

it. And if, for the sake of parrying the conclusion that would follow in this case, any one should aver, that *God is the real author of the Scriptures*, still this will make no important difference. God cannot impart all his knowledge to his creatures, i. e. he cannot make them omniscient, because their imperfect natures render this impossible. Nor can we rationally conceive, that he, when intending to make a revelation to them through the medium of language, would employ language in any other way than in one intelligible to them. The design in question would be entirely defeated by such a process.

Is it not then a great mistake to suppose, after the Gospel has been in existence for eighteen centuries, and Christianity been developing itself during all that period, that the more definite and extensive knowledge which we now have, or which is now attainable, is to be attributed to the ancient prophets, or is to be regarded as being comprised in an occult way in their predictions? And yet this mistake is every day coming before us. We are constantly meeting with books and sermons and pamphlets, which are attributing to ancient prophecies a pregnant sense that has been occult for some three thousand years, and assigning to them all the knowledge that we may now acquire, or have acquired. And all this, because Scripture must be made to mean all that it can mean, and dark prophecy must be illuminated, and can be explained, only by the occurrence of events predicted.

In the hands of such interpreters, it is evident that the Bible becomes a mere mass of wax, to be moulded and impressed in any way which fancy may dictate. And are we indeed left thus at the mercy of every man's caprice, at the disposal of every enthusiast's imagination? If so, how can we hope for the suffrages of the sober and inquiring part of the community? Men of this cast will not lis-



ten to us, when we invite them to travel with us in the dark. We need somewhere, and we must have, some *terra firma*; and to get possession of this, reason, judgment, correct taste, sound discretion, and some good knowledge of the laws of language, are absolutely requisite.

What says the same Peter, (to whom appeal is so often made in order to show that the prophets uttered some things which they did not understand), respecting the *obscurity* of prophecy? He says, that "we have a sure word of prophecy, whereunto we do well to take heed, as unto a *light shining in a dark place*," 2 Pet. 1: 19. *A light shining!* But how prophecy is a light, or how it shines, or can shine, before the events predicted are fulfilled, is a problem that cannot be solved on the ground of those whom I am here opposing. Instead of being a *light*, much of prophecy is (or has been) mere darkness visible, one might almost say palpable, until some future sun shall shed its rays upon it. Is this the manner of that God, "the entrance of whose word" into the mind, as the Psalmist affirms, "gives light and imparts understanding?"

Many of the ancient Christian Fathers made it a prominent ground of distinction between heathen oracles and real prophecies, that the latter were uttered by men conscious and cognizant of what they were uttering, while the former were announced by *μάντις*, whose own declarations were often unintelligible to themselves. Is not this, now, a suggestion of good common sense? Why should we suppose, that the prophets were bereft of consciousness and reason, at the very time when they were the subjects of inspiration and possessed a knowledge elevated above all which they had known before? I cannot well conceive how any honour is to be done to revelation, by this way of explaining the inspiration of its authors. What can be the advantage which any one expects to be gained? Prediction

must be intelligible, or else it does not concern those to whom it is addressed. The alleged obscurity in prophecy never could have originally existed. It is then, and only then, that we can be led to suppose that it exists, viz., when we attribute to ancient times and disclosures all the views which the gospel-day has disclosed to us.

To the representations so often made, that the prophets were like to men not conscious either of their own appropriate existence or of their own thoughts, and therefore were mere *automata* by means of which prophecy was uttered, I never can subscribe. To represent the prophets as being *out of themselves*, or as the mere strings of a lute which must be struck by another in order to render a sound, and when it does render one is still not conscious of so doing, or of the quality of the sound—all this, although often said and repeated, is, in my apprehension at least, not only *unscriptural* but *anti-scriptural*. If the prophets were merely *unconscious* instruments; if, as Hengstenberg affirms, the spirit of man *went out* when the Spirit of God *came in*; then what was it which made or enabled Jeremiah to refuse to prophesy, even when under strong prophetic influence (Jer. 20: 9); and why should he need the most powerful constraint in order to lead him to perform this duty? If men, when inspired, are mere *automata* or involuntary instruments, why does Paul so strongly censure the Corinthians (chap. xiv.) for *abusing* their spiritual gifts? Above all, if they are mere unconscious instruments, how can that be true which the apostle says, when he declares, that “the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets?” 1 Cor. 14: 32. According to Paul, men are *accountable* for the manner in which they employ the gift of prophecy. He taxes such of the Corinthian prophets as spoke in *an unknown tongue* without interpreting it, with great impropriety of conduct; and absolutely for-

bids that they should do so any more. He enjoins that the unknown tongue should be interpreted; or if there should be no interpreter present, that silence should be preserved. He says: "he would rather speak five words with the understanding, [i. e. which are intelligible], that by his voice he might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue;" 1 Cor. 14: 19. Why should this, the dictate both of common sense and of inspiration, be so entirely forgotten or neglected, in the theories of many interpreters of prophecies, and of many who have descanted on the inspiration of the prophets? It is as applicable to the Old Testament as to the New. It was as unworthy of God under the Mosaic dispensation, as under the gospel, to speak unintelligibly; and it would seem as if nothing but the love of mystery, of something recondite and strange, or reluctance at the labour of acquiring sufficient knowledge to explain prophecies, could ever have led men to introduce such paradoxes as I have been controverting, into the interpretation of the Scriptures.

To conclude this topic: How can we then subscribe to the sentiment, that prophecy, when originally uttered, was not only obscure but unintelligible? The men who uttered it were inspired; and if so, did they not understand what they meant to say? If they did, then have they not uttered their meaning in such a way that others can understand them? If all this be denied, then two conclusions inevitably follow; the first, that no revelation was made, so far as the passages in question are concerned, to the prophets themselves; for certain it is, that no revelation is made to any individual who can understand nothing of that which is communicated; the second, that others, who were addressed by the prophets, had in fact no revelation at all made to them; for if inspired men did not understand the things that were uttered, surely uninspired ones could

not understand them. Can any sober and reasonable man, now, bring himself to believe in such a state of things as this? Prophets speak in the name of God, and men are required to hear on penalty of death, and to give diligent heed to what is said. Yet, from the nature of the case, neither the prophet nor his hearers can obtain any correct view of what is said. The church is to wait for hundreds or thousands of years, before any true light dawns upon the darkness of the oracles. *Fulfillment* alone can diffuse this light. The treasure has been locked up, and withdrawn from the view of all; and yet men were bound to believe, that it was a precious treasure, and would at some period or other be available for use. But no; it never is truly available for any part of that purpose, in respect to which it professes to have been given. It was given as a *prediction*—given to *foretell* events that were to come. Yet it is no *prediction*; for it never is, or can be, understood, until that to which it relates has already taken place. Then, if at last it be understood at all, it has become *history*, and not prediction.

Heathen gods and oracles, we might well suspect, would affect mystery and concealment in some such way. We know that this has been often done. But how shall we defend the idea, that the God of truth, “the entrance of whose word giveth *light* and *understanding* to the simple;” who has made “*all* Scripture profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3: 16); who has, by his prophets, uttered predictions which he declares to be “a light shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1: 19); how shall we defend the notion, that he has uttered predictions to the ancient and to the later church, which neither patriarch, prophet, apostle, or martyr, could by any possibility understand? Must we not rather say, with the great apostle to the Gentiles:



“He that speaketh in an unknown tongue, speaketh not unto men, but unto God?” 1 Cor. 14: 2. May we not, must we not, insist with him, that “if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, no one can prepare himself for the battle?” Is it not lawful to argue as he does, and say: “Except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? For ye will speak into the air.” 1 Cor. 14: 7—9. Nay more: “If I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian to me.” 1 Cor. 14: 11. And what follows from all this, according to the judgment of Paul himself? The deduction is plain, simple, rational; it is this, that, “if there be no interpreter,” the prophet who was about to speak an unknown language in the church, “must keep silence.” 1 Cor. 14: 28. And yet after all this, which stands out in the full blaze of heaven’s light, we are every day told by one class of interpreters, that the ancient prophets habitually practised the very things, which Paul first argues down and (I might say) satirizes, and then forbids.

For myself, I hope to be forgiven, if I am slow to believe in such a case. Why should we convert the ancient prophets into “*barbarians*,” and make them “speak into the air?” Why should we strive to show, that they bear a character like that of the heathen prognosticators, the *μύσται* and *μάντις*? Can we suppose an omniscient God to resort to such expedients as these, merely in order to impress upon men the idea of his foreknowledge and of his unsearchableness? Nothing but conscious short-sightedness, and a feeling of inability to explain difficult passages of Scripture, would naturally conceal itself in this way. The thought of such mysterious and occult dealing is, at least in my view, incompatible with the character of him whose name is *Light* and *Love*. Yes; God is *Light*, and in

him is *no darkness* at all. Nor can I believe, that there is a prophet or an apostle, from Enoch down to the evangelist John, who would not each instantly say, could they be summoned as witnesses in the present case: "I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that *by my voice I might teach others also*, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue." 1 Cor. 14: 19.

I will only add, that if any one will carefully peruse the books of Commentary on the Scriptures, and the Essays on the prophecies which are extant in our mother tongue, he will soon find, that the *double sense* of Scripture, and particularly of Old Testament Scriptures which are supposed to contain predictions respecting Christ and the church, and the unintelligible nature of prophecies both in the Old Testament and the New respecting distant and future events, are made grounds of interpretation in cases almost without number and beyond credibility. It is time that this region of mysticism and imagination and fancy should be traversed. Let us not be overawed, like Homer's Ulysses and Virgil's Eneas, when we get into the region of *Umbrae*. No; rather let us take in one hand the torch of *revelation*, in the other that of reason, and advance boldly into the darkest recesses of this nether world. We shall find, after all, that there is nothing there but *Umbrae*, with which we shall be obliged to contend. And with all the show that may be made of discontent at our coming, and of oppugnation to our advancement, by the dwellers in that region, the light of reason and revelation will make them flee away, like the shadows of the night before the morning sun.

## § 4. DESIGNATIONS OF TIME IN THE PROPHECIES.

The endless discussions and difficulties that have arisen, in respect to these, must be familiarly known to every one who is acquainted with the interpretation of prophecy. Merely to recount the various methods of interpreting the designations of time, connected with the various modes of applying the prophecies which are consequent upon these interpretations, would occupy no inconsiderable volume. As it is no part of my design to exhaust the subject, I shall forbear in this case, as I have in the cases above, to bring before the reader any thing more of the views of others, than what may serve as a kind of basis for the question I intend to discuss. A polemic discussion which would have a mere private and individual bearing, is altogether remote from my design.

In entering upon the consideration of the great and difficult subject now proposed, I must beg leave to bring before the reader's mind some of the plain and obvious principles of interpretation, which ought to be observed in the pursuit of such inquiries as the present. I speak of the subject as being a *difficult* one, rather because of the division of opinion among critics respecting it, and because of the difficulty of ascertaining historical facts in some cases that are related to the prophecies, than because I apprehend the subject to be in itself very difficult, when simply considered without reference to any particular theory of interpretation. Once fully persuaded that the usual laws of language are to be applied to the designations of time in the prophetic books, our course is quite plain. If the periods designated are to be understood like other limitations of time in the Scriptures and in all other books, then we have merely to search for events which took place

at the respective periods named, and see whether they accord with the spirit, tenor, and design of the prophecy. When these events are disclosed, and their appropriateness exhibited, our work as interpreters is done.

First of all, then, I would remind the reader of one of the plainest and most cogent of all the rules of Hermeneutics. This is, that *every passage of Scripture, or of any other book, is to be interpreted as bearing its plain and primary and literal sense, unless good reason can be given why it should be tropically understood.*

A principle so plain and reasonable as this, scarcely needs any defence. The natural sense of all words is the original and literal one. The very phrase, *tropical sense*, or *figurative sense*, shows that the natural meaning of words is to be laid aside. But to lay this aside, there must be good and substantial reasons.

I have spoken of the *original* and *literal* sense of words as being the natural one. The original sense is that which the word was coined to convey; and of course this is the natural sense. But many words often deflect from this, in a considerable measure, without bearing what is usually called a tropical sense; e. g. *שִׁפְטוֹ* *to judge*, but also *to condemn* and *to vindicate*; *אָבַד* *to perish*, but also *to wander*, etc. It is thus that branches and limbs, as it were, spring out from the main trunk, which is the original meaning of the word; yet these, however numerous, while they preserve merely the character of *branches* and *limbs*, are not employed in a way simply tropical.

When we admit the tropical sense of a passage, it must be because, if literally understood, the subject and predicate would not harmonize, or because a literal sense would be frigid, unmeaning, or inappropriate. In such cases we assume the position, that the writer was guided by common sense, and did not mean to say what would involve a con-



tradiction or an absurdity, or what is frigid and inept. For example; believing most fully that God is a *spirit*, and that he was regarded by the sacred writers as such, when we find such a sentence as the following, "God is our sun," we say the word *sun* must not be understood in its usual acceptation, but in a *tropical* sense. And why? Because a *spirit* is not, and cannot be, a sensible, material, ever-varying, perishable object. We suppose the writer to mean, in such a case, that God is to us what the sun is to the natural world. He imparts life and light, and diffuses his blessings every where and without cessation.

In all cases where tropical language is employed by the sacred writers, it can be known by the application of some one of the principles which I have already mentioned. The judicious application of these, is what preeminently distinguishes one critic from another. Enthusiasts make shipwreck, when they launch upon the somewhat perilous ocean of figure and metaphor and allegory; and it needs a cool head, and some dexterity in practice, to guide the ship on her right course and always keep her safe and in perfect trim.

Without saying a word more upon this general subject, or upon the frequency of tropical language in the Scriptures, I would suggest, with special reference to the subject before us, that of all the various ingredients of which language is composed, and which render it capable of a tropical use, the designations of time, space, and numbers, appear to be the least susceptible of being so employed. The rareness of such a usage in regard to *time*, all must admit, even those who give such a meaning to designations of time in the books of Daniel and of the Revelation. Compared with the number of instances in the whole Bible, in which periods of time are named, and which (as all agree) must be *literally* interpreted, designations of this

nature in the particular books just named, to which a tropical or symbolical sense is assigned, are very few, even on the ground of those who advocate the symbolical sense. Perhaps we may find reason, in the sequel, to believe them to be much fewer than such interpreters would admit.

One thing in respect to this whole matter seems to be very plain, viz., that if we do, in any case, give to a designation of time an import different from its usual and natural meaning, we must, in order to justify ourselves, be moved by substantial and cogent reasons to interpret in this manner. If no such reasons can be given; if the plain and obvious sense fits both the passage in which a designation of time stands and the general aim of the writer; if facts can be pointed out which will accord with the prediction when literally understood; and if a tropical or symbolical sense would be irrelevant, alien from the usual method of speaking, and in fact even against a usage which is nearly universal; then we cannot in any way be justified in giving to designated periods of time a secondary or tropical sense. We are bound to interpret them in the simple manner in which they are presented to us.

I must solicit the reader to weigh well the sentiments which are comprised in the preceding paragraph. If they are conceded to be correct, (and to me it does not seem that they can be reasonably called in question), then they must have a very important bearing on the interpretation of such parts of Daniel and of the Apocalypse as have relation to periods of time.

It is of some importance, moreover, at this stage of our inquiry, to pass in review before us the general usage of the biblical writers in regard to *numbers* and *designations of time*.

In respect to numbers; we may say, that there is a *literal* and a *tropical* sense of the words which designate them;

in like manner as there is of a multitude of other words. We should not expect this, perhaps, if we reasoned about such a case in merely an *a priori* way; but facts make the whole matter very plain.

The *literal* sense of numbers needs no illustration. Every one spontaneously understands it. The *tropical* sense is also easily understood, but it requires, in this place, some illustration.

In most, if not all, languages, usage has affixed to certain numbers, (different ones, it may be, in different tongues), a kind of *generic* idea as to quantity, instead of the specific and definite idea which the number strictly interpreted would convey. For example: Peter asks his divine Master how often he ought to forgive the trespass of a brother; and in order to put the question, whether this should be done to any considerable extent, he throws it into the following form: "Shall I forgive him until seven times?" Matt. 18: 21. The answer is: "Until seventy times seven." Now *seven times* here is not designed to be literally interpreted, for it expresses merely a considerable number of times. In like manner, *seventy times seven* is not to be literally interpreted, for here it plainly means an indefinite number of times, or at least very many times, i. e. so many as would equal the number of offences whatever that might be.

In the same way a large number of passages of Scripture are to be understood; e. g. "In seven troubles no evil shall touch thee," Job 5: 19. "Wisdom hath hewn out her seven pillars," Prov. 9: 1. "Seven abominations are in the heart" [of a dissembler], Prov. 26: 25. "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold," Is. 30: 26. "A just man falleth seven times, and riseth again," Prov. 24: 16. "Thou shalt go out before thine enemy one way, and flee seven ways," Deut. 28: 7, 25. No sane interpreter would

ever dream of construing these and the like passages in the Bible in a literal way. He spontaneously connects them with the idea of a considerable, but indefinite quantity. Of course he gives to the number *seven*, in such a case, a tropical sense.

In like manner the number *three* is somewhat often employed in the sacred writings; and occasionally the number *ten*, *forty*, a *hundred*, and especially a *thousand*. This last number is employed where a quantity of time, space, etc., is intended to be designated, which is exceedingly great, or immeasurably large. Thus the Psalmist: "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday," Ps. 90: 4. "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day," 2 Pet. 3: 8.

In cases of this nature, there scarcely ever arises a doubt about the proper interpretation of the words designating *number*. When the context and the subject discussed show, that it would be no object with the writer to designate a definite and specific number, then the word employed to designate it is taken in a tropical sense; and, in general, cases of this nature are so plain that scarcely any reader misunderstands them. In a word; the subject-matter determines and defines the nature of the affirmation respecting it.

The original reason why some numbers were chosen in preference to others, and what that was in them which led to such a *usus loquendi*, would be a curious and interesting subject of inquiry. Bähr has cast some light on this, in his *Symbolik*; but my present design renders it impracticable even to advert to any specific reasons for the selection of this or that number for the tropical use. Enough for my purpose, that the fact of such a usage admits of no reasonable denial, nor even reasonable question.

Nothing needs to be said, at present, respecting the use



of numbers in Scripture, unless it be, that occasionally there is a shade of tropical meaning somewhat different from that which has been already pointed out, and which might perhaps be named *symbolical*. Thus *seven* is often said to be the *perfect* number, i. e. it designates the general idea of *completion* or *perfection*. Thus in Is. xi. *seven spirits* are ascribed to the Messiah, i. e. he is to be furnished with such endowments as will render him a complete and perfect Saviour. In like manner the *seven spirits* of God, mentioned in Rev. 1: 4, are interpreted by some highly respectable critics. And again, in Rev. 3: 1, the Messiah, it is affirmed, "hath the seven Spirits of God;" which is also interpreted by many in the same manner as in Is. xi. In many other passages, also, the number seven plainly denotes the idea of *completion* or *sufficiency*; and when thus employed we may say, that it has a *symbolical* sense, i. e. it stands as a symbol for something which is not to be scanned by definite *quantity*, but by the relation which seven may bear to some idea of *quality*, i. e. completion, perfection. It matters not, for the interpreter, whether seven in its own nature stands related to perfection; enough that usage pre-supposes this and employs language accordingly.

Besides the number *seven*, we may find not a few cases of the number *three* which are employed much in the same way, although it may lack something of the fulness and completion which the number *seven* more naturally designates.

But let the reader beware not to extend the tropical use of numbers to all and any numbers of every class. It would be a great mistake so to interpret the Scriptures. The usages of language confine the tropical meaning to a few leading and specially significant numbers, such as have been already designated. At least such is the usage of the

Scriptures. The consequences of such a fact are of serious import to the interpreter. The probability is, of course, that all numbers, not belonging to that select and limited class, are to be literally interpreted. Indeed, it is a matter of course so to interpret them ; and nothing but the most cogent reasons, drawn from the context, can justify any other interpretation. In fact, even those numbers which are often employed in a tropical or symbolical way, are to be thus understood, only when there is good reason to be found in the context for supposing that the writer meant to employ them in this way. Any other method of interpreting the Scriptures would lead to the most arbitrary and extravagant conclusions.

From the usage which has respect to *numbers*, we will now proceed to that which has respect to *periods of time*. Here also is a *literal* and a *tropical* usage. The first needs no explanation ; the second may be illustrated in a few words.

It is said of Jehovah : "Thy years shall not fail." Here the word *years* is not confined to periods of 360 or 365 days, but means time indefinite, which is measured, so far as we reckon it, by years. So the word *day* and *days* are often employed in a generic sense. Thus : "In the latter day ;" "Thy days are numbered ;" "The day of the Lord ;" and other very frequent expressions of the like meaning. So is it also with the word *hour*. The sum of all is, that the specific designations of time, viz. *day*, *days*, *year*, *years*, etc., are often employed in the *generic* sense of time. In all such cases, *synecdoche*, i. e. a figure of speech where a part is taken for the whole and *vice versâ*, is to be found ; and no figure in rhetoric is more usual than this, in all languages whatever.

Thus it is with the designations of time, when they stand in a simple state, unconnected with *numbers* which limit

them and render them specific. But very different is the case, when they stand connected with such limitations by numbers. The very fact that *numerals* are connected with them, is of itself a proof that the writer means to *limit* them. If there be any examples of a different usage, they can be only such as mark a period which may be *symbolical*, in like manner as we have seen the numbers seven, three, etc., sometimes to be symbolically employed. While we concede that there are examples of this nature, yet they are certainly very rare. *A thousand years* may be, in some passages, comprised among these examples; and possibly *seven years* and *three years* may in some cases be supposed to belong here. But of this last supposition, there is no little reason, as it seems to me, to doubt.

✓ At all events, nothing but an imperious necessity can justify us in explaining *years* or *days*, when accompanied with definite numerals, in a tropical way, except the necessity of the case. If any good and appropriate sense can be made without resort to such an expedient, we are clearly bound, as interpreters, to abide by it.

○ Our way is now prepared to investigate the designations of time in Daniel and in the Apocalypse. And here the designations of *times* are, for the most part, accompanied by *numerals*; and of course, unless some valid and satisfactory reason can be given for a different interpretation, they are to be considered as intended simply to mark the periods which they designate. No one, we may presume, will call in question a principle so plain, and so obviously the dictate of reason as this.

✓ Let us make now the supposition, that the times specified in the book of Daniel and in the Apocalypse may all be understood according to their plain and obvious import, and that when thus understood they not only accord with the design of the writer, but are indispensable (in this

mode of interpretation) to the object which he has in view ; is there any one who can reasonably call in question that exegesis which interprets them agreeably to the common usages of language ? Apart from all preconceived and favourite schemes of interpretation, where a particular end is to be accomplished by giving to numbers a symbolic sense, no considerate man would hesitate to subscribe to such a sentiment. It becomes then an imperious duty of the interpreter to examine thoroughly the nature of the case before us, and see whether Daniel and John may not have employed the designations of time, exhibited in their works, in the usual and ordinary manner. And if it should turn out, upon examination, to be matter of fact, that historical occurrences predicted by them accord with those designations when interpreted in a simple and obvious way, who will venture to maintain with confidence, that any other interpretation than the obvious one is to be given to the periods in question ? I know indeed that there are some, who are apparently so attached to favourite methods of interpreting, that not even an argument of so plain and cogent a nature will satisfy them. Among intelligent, considerate, and impartial men, however, I am persuaded that such an argument, if well supported, will find a patient hearing if not a welcome reception.

The truth plainly is, that the public mind begins to grow weary of being tossed so long on a tempestuous sea of conjecture, in regard to the meaning of Scripture. Men of inquiring minds wish to know what the Bible says, when interpreted by principles of exegesis which are stable, well grounded, and capable of an honest and open and intelligible defence. There is no end of the *arbitrary* and the *fanciful*. When we are once cast upon such a sea, it is quite impossible to tell with certainty what harbour we shall ultimately make. - Like the Corinthians who had



every man *his own interpretation*, the arbitrary and fanciful interpreters of our own times scarcely ever agree; and even if they do, whether the church derives any edification from their views of prophecy, is a serious question indeed. At all events, if a more sober, rational, and normal method of interpretation can fairly be pointed out, sooner or later the public mind will approve of it and admit it.

Enough has been said to show, that the plain and obvious interpretation of *numbers* in the prophecies is to be followed, unless there be cogent reasons for a departure from this rule. If there be indeed such reasons, we may then admit a tropical or symbolical sense; for so much I most readily concede. But there are only two sources, so far as I can perceive, from which reasons of such a nature can be drawn. The first is, *analogy in other parts of the Scriptures*; the second, *the exigencies of the context*. Let us pursue the examination of our subject, by inquiring how the matter before us stands, in relation to each of these.

✓ **FIRST, *analogy with other parts of Scripture.***

It is a singular fact, that the great mass of interpreters in the English and American world have, for many years, been wont to understand the *days* designated in Daniel and in the Apocalypse, as the representatives or symbols of *years*. I have found it difficult to trace the origin of this general, I might say, almost universal custom. Without venturing on a positive statement, I am inclined to believe that we may trace it mainly to the distinguished Joseph Mede, who lived and wrote during the first quarter of the seventeenth century. His *Clavis Apocalyptica* (Key to the Apocalypse) excited much attention when it was published, and indeed for a long time afterwards. Many criticisms were made upon it by the learned; and in the explanation and defence of the positions which he had taken in that work, Mede wrote many comments, essays, and letters.

The learning, piety, and (in general) sobriety of mind, which this distinguished work exhibited, gave it great influence in the religious community in England, and eventually in America. Abroad, Vitringa and others attacked some of its leading positions, and, as was generally conceded, overthrew them. Still the influence of this work on English commentary, has been felt down to the present hour. Particularly is it so in regard to the subject of reckoning *time*; the consideration of which is now before us.

Mede assumes the position, that the *days* in Daniel and in the Apocalypse are to be regarded as the symbols of *years*. In his *Remains on some Passages in the Apocalypse*, chap. ix., he goes at some length into a defence of this position. His chief reliance for aid to establish this position, is on the multiplicity and continuance of events which are predicted as standing in connection with the periods named. The amount of all is, that, in his view, such events must occupy more time than is assigned to them, if the natural and obvious meaning of the designations of time should be admitted. He also appeals to Dan. 9: 24, as justifying his interpretation.

The former reason will be touched upon, in its proper place. The latter plainly ranges itself under the question now before us.

Since the time of Mede, interpreters have made additions to the stock of such analogies as will help to support the interpretation of *one day* as being the symbol of a *year*. Our first business, then, is to examine these alleged analogies.

I begin with those passages on which the most stress has apparently been laid, down to the present time. In Ezek. 4: 5, 6, the prophet represents himself as having received a command to "lie upon his left side 390 days, in

order that so he might bear the iniquity of the house of Israel ;” also to “ lie upon his right side 40 days, in order to bear the iniquity of the house Judah.” It is then added expressly by divine monition : “ I have appointed *each day for a year*,” i. e. each day is the symbol of a year, in regard to the duration of the time in which Israel and Judah shall be chastised.

In respect to this account of the prophet’s symbolic action, we may remark, first, that it would be absurd to suppose that the symbol should be of as long continuance as the thing symbolized. The symbolic actions were to be performed by one individual, and therefore could not continue for 390 years, and after that for 40 years more. Of course, if Ezekiel were in person to exhibit the symbols enjoined, there was no feasible manner of doing this, except by making a short period the symbol of a long one, i. e. a *day* to symbolize a *year*.

Whether the prophet actually performed the symbolic actions in question, or not, is of no consequence to the present discussion. The *representation* of such a symbol to be exhibited, would convey the same instruction for substance to the Jews, as the acting of it all out. We could only say, in the latter case, that the vividness of the representation would be augmented. But,

Secondly, the prophet is *expressly told*, in this case, that *one day is to be the symbol of a year*. Why ? Plainly because it would never enter the mind of himself or of any other man, that such could be the case, unless he were expressly informed of it. What bearing then, in the way of analogy, does or can this have upon the designations of time in Daniel and in the Apocalypse ? Certainly none ; for in these books we have no information given of such a nature. The writers never once hint at such a mode of interpretation. What follows, then, except that we must

interpret these books in the usual way? A special communication to Ezekiel was deemed necessary in order to his understanding that *days* would or could be the symbols of *years*. Such a communication was in fact necessary; for nothing can be more natural to all men, than to interpret plain designations of time in the simple and usual way. To prevent Ezekiel from doing so, the symbolic significance of *days* is a matter of express injunction. This of course constitutes a good and adequate reason for adopting the symbolical meaning of the word *day* in the passage before us.

But how is it with the designation of times in Daniel and in the Apocalypse, where no such injunction or explanation is given? There can be, as it seems to me, but one answer to this question; which is, that *those times are of course to be reckoned in the usual manner*. Instead of being aided, then, by an appeal to Ezek. 4: 5, 6, we find that a principle is in fact recognized there, which makes directly against the interpretation which we are calling in question. The express exception as to the usual mode of reckoning, which is there virtually made, goes, under such circumstances, directly to show that the general rule would necessitate us to adopt a different interpretation.

The same principles apply to another passage in Num. xiv., to which appeal has more recently been made by some with great confidence. When Moses was approaching the land of Canaan, spies were sent out to go and search the country, and make report concerning it on their return. They were 40 *days* in executing their mission; and when they returned, most of them gave in a bad report of the land, which occasioned great discontent and rebellion in the camp of Israel. This was displeasing to God, and he declared that Israel should wander in the desert for 40 *years*, each year corresponding to one of the 40



days during which the spies had been absent, Num. 14: 33, 34.

Here now we perceive at once, that the whole is dependent on special divine appointment. Had the declaration been, that 'Israel should wander in the desert according to the time in which the spies had been absent,' would any one have ever supposed that *40 years* were meant? It is conceded that they would not, in the very fact that *express* mention is made, that *days* are to stand as the symbols of *years*. Without a declaration of this import, no one would ever have surmised that the case was such. Now as neither Daniel nor the Apocalypse ever mention such a mode of counting days for years, what else can we do, except to follow the common laws of language in the interpretation of their predictions?

It should be noted, also, that both the cases above recited are dependent on and connected with the duration of symbolic and significant *actions*. These actions, from their very nature, must be of short continuance, in order to be a proper means of instruction for the generation then living; but to reason from these to cases like those in Daniel and John, where no symbol of the nature in question is employed, must as one would naturally suppose, be deemed very inconclusive and unsatisfactory by every considerate man. In Ezek. and in Numbers, a *short* period of days in which certain actions are performed, is made the symbol of a *long* period in which a continued and important series of actions and occurrences are to take place. But in the Apocalypse and in Daniel, there is merely one simple designation of time during which future events are to take place.

Since then the instances in Ezek. and in Numbers are plainly so dissimilar to those in the other books named, it is no wonder that Joseph Mede did not venture to appeal

to them in support of his supposition. He has appealed, however, to Daniel 9: 24; and as others have followed him in this appeal, it will be necessary briefly to examine this passage.

Daniel had been meditating on the accomplishment of the 70 *years* of exile for the Jews which Jeremiah had predicted; Jer. 25: 12. 29: 10. Dan. 9: 1—3. At the close of the fervent supplication for his people which he makes, in connection with his meditation, Gabriel appears, and announces to him that “*Seventy sevens* are appointed for his people,” as it respects the time then future, in which various and very important events are to take place. Our translation renders the words שְׁבַעִים שָׁבָעִים, *seventy weeks*. But throughout the Scriptures there is, if we except three instances in the book of Daniel, no such form as שְׁבַעִים which means *weeks*. This is only and always שְׁבַעִת or שְׁבִיעִת. The form שְׁבַעִים, therefore, which is a regular masculine plural, is no doubt purposely chosen to designate *the plural of seven*; and with great propriety here, inasmuch as there are many sevens which are to be joined together in one common sum. The manner in which I have translated the words in question, therefore, gives an exact representation of the Hebrew original. Daniel had been meditating on the close of the 70 *years* of Hebrew exile, and the angel now discloses to him a new period of *seventy times seven*, in which still more important events are to take place. “*Seventy sevens*,” or (to use Greek phraseology) “*seventy heptades* are determined upon thy people.” Heptades of what? Of days, or of years? No one can doubt what the answer is. Daniel had been making diligent search respecting the 70 *years*; and, in such a connection, nothing but seventy heptades of years could be reasonably supposed to be meant by the angel. But independently of this, the nature of the case is sufficient. *Years* are the measure of

all considerable periods of time. When the angel speaks, then, in reference to certain events, and declares that they are to take place during *seventy heptades*, it is a matter of course to suppose him to mean *years*. If he had not meant so, then some word would have been added in order to render it plain what his meaning was.

And so it actually happens, in Dan. 10: 2, 3, where he again employs the peculiar plural, שִׁבְעִים. But as the period designated in this last passage has respect to a season of fasting which the prophet had kept, and as this could not be a period of three *years*, so the writer adds, after the words *three sevens* (in our version, *three whole weeks*), the word יָמִים, *days*. He fasted "*three sevens as to days*" is a literal and grammatical version. This means, indeed, *three whole weeks*, as our version has it; but the shape of the Hebrew expression is different from this.

These examples render it quite plain, therefore, that when, in Dan. 9: 24, the angel speaks of *seventy heptades* he must of course be understood as meaning so many heptades of years = 490 years. He has not made *days* at all the representative of *years*, in this case, but merely and simply designated the number of years. And as to chap. 10: 2, 3, surely no one will contend that Daniel fasted twenty-one *years*; which must be the conclusion, however, if days are to be regarded as the representatives of years, in the writings of this prophet. But in 9: 24, as has been said, *days* are not brought at all into question. The phraseology employed (*seventy heptades*) is indeed elliptical; yet it is not at all obscure, for every mind spontaneously supplies the word *years*, in such a connection.

The appeal to Daniel, then, for an example of employing *days* for *years*, is certainly not well directed, when made to the passage in question. Indeed, the exact contrary of such a usage is manifest, when we read onward only six

verses more; for in 10: 2, 3, the ground assumed would necessarily make Daniel to say, that he fasted in the most rigid manner for twenty-one years! The credibility of this, on any ground, needs not to be argued against.

Thus much for analogies in the Old Testament Scriptures, that have respect to the modes of designating time. Not one of the cases that have been examined, (and these are all on which any reliance can be placed), answers at all the end for which an appeal is made, by the interpreters whose opinion is under examination.

But I will not content myself, in this case, with the examination of these alleged analogies. Another duty remains; and this is, to produce examples of the contrary mode of reckoning; examples which show, that in prophecy, as elsewhere, the designations of time are to be understood in their natural and obvious sense, unless there is some direction or intimation that we must not interpret them in this manner.

In Gen. 6: 3, God announces that the days of men, before the flood comes upon them, shall be 120 years. By the rule of one day for a year, this would amount to 43,920 years; in which case it is not so much to be wondered at, that the antediluvians were not moved by fear in consequence of Noah's threats. In Gen. 7: 4, God declares, that after seven days he will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights. Is this then the same as saying, that after seven years it shall begin to rain, and then shall continue to do so for the period of forty years? In Gen. 15: 13 it is predicted, that Abraham's posterity shall be bondmen in Egypt 400 years. Does this mean, that they shall live there in that capacity during 144,000 years? Gen. 40: 1 predicts seven years of plenty and seven of famine to Egypt. Can this mean 2,520 years of each in succession? In Num. 14: 33 it is declared, that Israel



shall wander in the wilderness forty years. Does this mean 14,400 years? Does not history inform us what the exact and actual period was? In Ezek. 29: 11, 12, there is a threat of forty years' wasting to the Egyptians. Does this mean 14,400? In Jonah 3: 4 it is declared, that Nineveh shall be overthrown within forty days; in Is. 7: 8 it is said, that Ephraim shall be broken within sixty-five years; in Is. 16: 14, that the glory of Moab shall be contemned within three years; in Jer. 25: 11. 29: 10 the period of seventy years' exile is threatened; and the like in other passages of the prophets, which need not be recited; and yet we never once even dream of putting a *day* for a *year* in a single instance among all these cases. Why? Because we have no intimation that the passages are not to be interpreted in the ordinary way; and nothing in the context obliges us to think of a different mode of interpretation. Even so I trust it may prove to be, in cases yet to be examined, and which constitute the basis of our present inquiry.

Nothing can be plainer, then, than that *usage* in the prophecies, as to *designations of time*, does not differ from ordinary usage elsewhere. If there be any cases where a difference is to be made out, it must be on entirely other grounds than that of analogy. We have seen that the analogy asserted can by no means be established; and therefore we cannot appeal to it. We come then to examine,

✓ *SECONDLY, whether the designations of time in Daniel and in the Apocalypse admit of a satisfactory solution on the common ground of grammatico-historical exegesis.*

We must begin with the book of Daniel, because, as all will concede, the Apocalypse has followed in many respects closely in the steps of this ancient prophet. And, which is more important still, Daniel has twice brought into view a famous period equivalent to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years=42 months=1260

days. If the use of this number of days is symbolical in the book of Revelation, then it must be conceded as probable, that it is symbolical also in the book of Daniel; and so, *vice versâ*. At least the great mass of recent commentators in the English world, who suppose that the same things are predicted in both these books, cannot well avoid such a conclusion. It is proper, therefore, that we begin with the 1260 days or  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years in the book of Daniel.

We do not find this period, indeed, specifically named. But it is virtually designated in the expression *time, times, and the dividing* (i. e. half) *of time*. In chap. 7: 25, (which is Chaldee), the main word is  $\text{זמן}$ ; in 12: 7 (Hebrew) it is  $\text{מוֹדֵד}$ . Both of these words are from the kindred roots  $\text{זָרַד}$  and  $\text{זָרַע$ , and mean, conformably to their etymology, *a set, fixed, or appointed time*. Of course this happily designates the *year*, the appointed and usual standard for the measurement of time. *A time, times, and half a time*, therefore, mean one year, two years, and half a year =  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years = 42 months = 1260 days. This is the same period on which so much turns in Rev. xi.—xiii.; and one cannot well refrain from believing, that the measure of time in both of these books is designed to be the same.

What then is the actual time which is designated, in those several passages of Daniel that have been specified? In order to answer this question we must first advert to the subject-matter of each prophecy, as developed by the context.

The first passage, in Dan. 7: 25, is so clear as to leave no room for reasonable doubt. In v. 24 the rise of Antiochus Epiphanes is described; for the fourth beast in 7: 7, 8, 11, 19—26, as all must concede, is the divided Grecian dominion which succeeded the reign of Alexander the Great. From this dynasty springs Antiochus, v. 24, who is most graphically described, in v. 25, as one who

“shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out (destroy) the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws; and they shall be given into his hands, *until a time, and times, and the dividing of time.*” The long, bitter, and bloody persecutions of Epiphanes; his persevering efforts to abolish the Jewish ritual, and even to extinguish the religion which the Hebrews professed, and destroy all copies of the holy Scriptures which were in their hands; are too well known as historical facts, to need any comment here, or any specification. The only question on which any thing needs to be said, is: How does the result here described, viz., ‘the giving up all these things into his hands,’ accord with the time specified, provided the designation of this time be interpreted by the common laws of exegesis?

The facts are these. In the year 168 *before Christ*, (usually designated by B. C.), in the month of May, Antiochus Epiphanes was on his way to attack Egypt, and he detached Apollonius, one of his military confidants, with 22,000 soldiers, in order to subdue and plunder Jerusalem. The mission was executed with entire success. A horrible slaughter was made of the men at Jerusalem, and a large portion of the women and children, being made captives, were sold and treated as slaves. The services of the temple were interrupted, and its joyful feasts were turned into mourning, 1 Macc. 1: 37—39. Soon after this the Jews in general were compelled to eat swine’s flesh, and to sacrifice to idols. In December of that same year, the temple was profaned by introducing the statue of Jupiter Olympius; and on the 25th of that month, sacrifices were offered to that idol on the altar of Jehovah. Just three years after this last event, viz., December 25th, 165 B. C., the temple was expurgated by Judas Maccabaeus, and the worship of Jehovah restored. Thus three years and a half,

or almost exactly this period, passed away, while Antiochus had complete possession and control of every thing in and around Jerusalem and the temple. It may be noted, also, that just three years passed, from the time when the profanation of the temple was carried to its greatest height, viz., by sacrificing to the statue of Jupiter Olympius upon the altar of Jehovah, down to the time when Judas renewed the regular worship.

I mention this last circumstance in order to account for the *three years* of Antiochus' profanations, which are named as the period of them in Josephus, Antiq. XII. 7. § 6. This period tallies exactly with the time during which the profanation was consummated, if we reckon down to the period when the temple worship was restored by Judas Maccabaeus. But in Proem. ad Bell. Jud. § 7, and Bell. Jud. I. 1. § 1, Josephus reckons  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years as the period during which Antiochus ravaged Jerusalem and Judea. There is no contradiction in this writer, however, in case we refer each period to the occurrences which it was designed to mark.

After all, we are not confined to his authority for the facts stated. The reader will find many authors referred to, in Usher's Annals, 168 et seq. B. C.; in Froelich, Annales Regum Syriae, chap. on Antioch. Epiphanes, (an admirable work); in Jahn's Hebrew Commonwealth, and in Prideaux's Connection, etc., under the appropriate head in each. To save time and to avoid repetition, I refer the reader to these sources of information, and to the ancient histories cited in them; most of which may be procured with little trouble, and also are of easy access. And in like manner, to save repetition would I here make a reference to the same sources, as to *subsequent* historical facts which will be stated in the course of this investigation respecting the book of Daniel.



Another passage parallel to Dan. 7: 25, which we have just examined, is Dan. 12: 7, where the same limitation of time occurs, and in connection (for this I cannot doubt) with the same individual, i. e. with Antiochus Epiphanes. As in many other cases, particularly in Isaiah and Daniel, an unfortunate division has been made by *chapters* which greatly obscures the sense of the original Scripture, so here there is an instance of the like mistake, which is much to be regretted. It is quite plain, that Dan. xi. and xii. are closely and inseparably connected, as one continued series of predictions, closing with some inquiries and answers, the object of which is to throw light on those predictions. That Antiochus Epiphanes is described in 11: 21—45, is past all question. The graphic historical correctness and minuteness of the description here, is even such as can be found no where else in the whole Bible. Porphyry, in the latter part of the third century, charged this composition with being *a prophecy post eventum*; and it must be acknowledged that it is difficult, at the present time, when one compares other prophecies, not to feel moved in some measure to entertain a similar view. The reason is, that in point of minuteness and exactness of specification nothing elsewhere in the whole Scripture can be found to compare with it; so exactly, and at so great length, does it give the history of Antiochus.

That the beginning of chap. xii. is a mere continuation of the angel's address to Daniel, is plain from a mere glance. This address ends with v. 4; and then commences a colloquy between two angels, designed to cast further light on what had been said. One angel inquires of the other: "How long shall it be to the end of these wonders?" The answer, introduced by an appeal to Heaven for confirmation of its truth, is, that "it shall be for a time, and times, and a half; and when he shall have entirely com-

pleted the dashing in pieces [שִׁבְרָה] of the power of the holy people, all these things shall be accomplished." That is, the time when Antiochus will cease from persecuting the Jews and profaning the temple, or the end of the wonderful things that have been foretold, will be  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years from the commencement of his most violent course; and when he shall have been destroyed and his power over the Jews shall have come to an end, then will have been fulfilled all the things of which the angel had been giving information to Daniel. In other words; Dan. 12: 7 marks the *terminus ad quem* of the predictions which immediately precede it. And that the *dashing in pieces*, i. e. utterly destroying or suppressing the power of the Jews, is to be referred altogether to Antiochus, no one who reads Dan. 7: 25, and 11: 21—45, and makes comparison of them with the annunciation here, can well doubt. Verses 30—35 of chap. xl. show fully what is meant in 12: 7, by *dashing in pieces the power of the holy people*; and the whole shows that the outrages of Antiochus, i. e. his final and most bitter persecution of the Jews, with their complete subjugation, is designed to be characterized here. And this, as we have already seen, lasted for a period of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years.

We see, then, an entire coincidence of manner and matter between Dan. 7: 25 and 12: 7. The same time is designated by both in the same way, and the same person and same events are referred to in both. Of course we do not need a re-investigation here of facts in the history of Antiochus. The correspondence of prediction and history is so striking, that none can refuse to perceive it. The only difficult question that will arise here for the interpreter is: Whether 12: 1—3 is to be interpreted so as to refer it to the troubles which Judea experienced shortly before the great victory under Judas Maccabaeus which ended in the restoration of liberty to the Hebrews, and also

to the blessings consequent on their renewed liberty, thus making it parallel with Ezek. 37: 1—14; or whether the passage looks forward to the Messianic period and final resurrection. Into this question I cannot enter here; nor is it important to the object which I have in view. The passage in 12: 7, undoubtedly refers to the leading and prominent part of the prophecy which precedes; and this plainly has respect to Antiochus.

I am aware that some have found a *ὑπόνοια* in 7: 25, and also in 12: 7; i. e. they have interpreted both passages as having reference to Antichrist in their secondary sense, or to the beast which is described in Rev. xiii. and the sequel. But how this can be brought about, in the present case, I do not perceive. There, so far as it respects Antiochus, no more than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years literally understood can possibly be meant. The utter absurdity of supposing Daniel to predict, that Antiochus himself in person should persecute the Jews for 1260 years, needs no exposure. But how  $3\frac{1}{2}$  literal years can be meant in the *type*, (as they speak), and yet this same identical period amount to 1260 years in the *antitype*, i. e. Antichrist, is a problem in exegesis, that has yet received no solution, and surely admits of no satisfactory one. The bare statement of the whole matter is a complete refutation of the exegesis put upon the passages in question.

I have only one more remark to make, before I proceed to the examination of other passages. This is, that the reader should well note here the *general* nature of the limitation of time. It is not specifically designated by *years*, or *months*, or *days*, but it is expressed in general language, viz., “time, times, and a half.” The very manner of the expression indicates, of course, that it was not the design of the speaker or writer to be exact to a day or an hour. A little more or a little less than  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years would, as every

reasonable interpreter must acknowledge, accord perfectly well with the general designation here, where plainly the aim is not statistical exactness, but a *mere general characterizing* of the period in question. We shall see reason to believe, in the sequel, that some 30 days more than exactly  $3\frac{1}{2}$  prophetic years were occupied by the disastrous occurrences under the reign of Antiochus; for in another passage, where the *exact* period is probably intended to be marked, the number of days is specifically given.

As this exact period stands particularly related to the general designation of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, which we have already considered, it will facilitate our inquiries to take the exact designation next into consideration. In Dan. 12: 11 it is said: "From the time that the daily sacrifice shall be taken away, and the abomination that maketh desolate set up, there shall be *a thousand two hundred and ninety days*." This period exceeds the 1260 days by one month or thirty days.

That the same persecuting power is adverted to here, as in Dan. 7: 25. 11: 30—35, and 12: 7, no one, I apprehend, will doubt, who well considers the language. Antiochus "took away the daily sacrifice," as is here declared. This was in the latter part of May, B. C. 168. Profane history does not indeed give us the *day*; but it designates the year and the season. As we have already seen, about  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years elapsed, after the temple worship was entirely broken up, before Judas Maccabaeus expurgated the temple and restored its rites. This *terminus ad quem* is not mentioned in the verse now before us; but still, it is plainly implied. The end of the 1290 days must of course be marked by some signal event, just as the commencement of them is so marked. And as the *suppression* of the temple-rites constitutes the definitive mark of the commencement, so it would seem plain, that the *restoration* of the



same rites must mark the conclusion of the period which is designated. The "time of the end," i. e. the period at the close of which the persecutions of Antiochus would cease, is distinctly adverted to in 7: 25. 11: 30—35, and 12: 7. The nature of the case, in the verse before us, shows that the same period is tacitly referred to in the words of the speaker.

It is needless, therefore, to repeat here what has already been set before the reader, viz. the history of the invasion and profanation of the temple by Antiochus. No doubt remains, that his march from Antioch to Egypt, for hostile purposes, was in the Spring of the year 168 B. C. He was delayed for some time on this march, by ambassadors from Egypt who met him in Cælo-syria. Very naturally therefore we may conclude, that he arrived opposite Jerusalem in the latter part of May, and that there and then he commissioned Apollonius to rifle and profane the temple. The exact time from the period when this was done, down to the time of expurgation, seems to have been, and is designated as being, 1290 days.

Intimately connected with the passage last examined, and standing in immediate succession, is another passage in Dan. 12: 12. It runs thus: "Blessed is he that waiteth, and cometh to the one thousand three hundred and thirty-five days." The place which this passage occupies, shows that the *terminus a quo*, or period from which the days designated are to be reckoned, is the same as that to which reference is made in the preceding verse. This, as we have already seen, is the period when Antiochus, by his military agent Apollonius, took possession of Jerusalem and put a stop to the temple worship there. The author of the first book of Maccabees, who is allowed by all to deserve credit as a historian, after describing the capture of Jerusalem by the agent of Antiochus, (in the year 145

of the era of the Seleucidae = 168 B. C.), and setting before the reader the wide-spread devastation which ensued, adds, respecting the invaders: "They shed innocent blood around the sanctuary, and defiled the holy place; and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fled away; . . . the sanctuary thereof was made desolate; her feasts were turned into mourning, her sabbaths into a reproach, and her honour into disgrace;" 1 Macc. 1: 37—39. To the period when this state of things commenced we must look, in order to find the date from which the 1335 days are to be reckoned. Supposing then that Apollonius captured Jerusalem in the latter part of May, B. C. 168, the 1335 days would expire about the middle of Feb. in the year B. C. 164. Did any event take place at this period, which would naturally call forth the congratulations of the prophet, as addressed in the text before us to the Jewish people?

History enables us readily to answer this question. Late in the year 165 B. C., or at least very early in the year 164 B. C., Antiochus Epiphanes, learning that there were insurrections and great disturbances in Armenia and Persia, hastened thither with a portion of his armies, while the other portion was commissioned against Palestine. He was victorious for a time; but being led by cupidity to seek for the treasures that were laid up in the temple of the Persian Diana at Elymais, he undertook to rifle them. The inhabitants of the place, however, rose *en masse* and drove him out from the city; after which he fled to Ecbatana. There he heard of the total discomfiture by Judas Maccabaeus of his troops in Palestine, which were led on by Nicanor and Timotheus. In the rage occasioned by this disappointment, he uttered the most horrid blasphemies against the God of the Jews, and threatened to make Jerusalem the burying-place of the nation. Immediately he directed his course toward Judea; and designing to

pass through Babylon, he made all possible haste in his journey. In the mean time he had a fall from his chariot, which injured him; and soon after, being seized with a mortal sickness in his bowels, (probably the cholera), he died at Tabae, in the mountainous country, near the confines of Babylonia and Persia. Report stated, even in ancient times, that Antiochus was greatly distressed on his death-bed by the sacrileges which he had committed.

Thus perished the most bitter and bloody enemy which ever rose up against the Jewish nation and their worship. By following the series of events it is easy to see, that his death took place some time in February of the year 164, B. C. Assuming that the *terminus a quo* of the 1335 days is the same as that of the 1290 days, (as already remarked above), it is plain that they terminate at the same period, when the death of Antiochus is said to have taken place. "It was long before the commencement of the Spring," says Froelich in his excellent work before quoted, "that Antiochus passed the Euphrates and made his attack upon Elymais" (p. 52); so that no more probable time can be fixed upon for his death, than at the expiration of the 1335 days, i. e. some time in February of 164 B. C. No wonder that the angel pronounced those of the pious and believing Jews to be *blessed*, who lived to see such a day of deliverance. X The great enemy of their nation and their God had fallen; Judas Maccabaeus had become every where victorious; the sanctuary was now cleansed of its pollution, pure worship was restored, and the Hebrews had every prospect of independence and of happiness. In fact, their own kings reigned over them for a long time after this; so that the death of Antiochus was a most important means of securing both civil and religious liberty.

How perfectly natural such an explanation is, and how consonant with the spirit of the Hebrews, on like occa-

sions, any one may see who will consult Isaiah and John. When the king of Babylon, the great enemy of the Jews, falls, "the whole earth breaks forth into singing, the fir trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over him," Is. 14: 7, 8. When spiritual Babylon, i. e. persecuting Rome, falls, John calls upon "heaven and holy apostles and prophets to rejoice over her, because God has avenged them on her," Rev. 19: 20. Can it be any matter of wonder then, that Daniel congratulates those who should survive Antiochus Epiphanes, and calls them *blessed*, i. e. happy, when they shall have lived to see the day in which liberty and peace, civil and religious, are once more secure from the assaults of such an unrelenting tyrant?

One, and only one, more period in the book of Daniel claims our present attention. This is in chap. viii. 14. In the vision seen by Daniel, as there related, one angel inquires of another, 'How long the sanctuary and the host are given to be trodden under foot.' The answer is: "To two thousand three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed."

The time here designated has been matter of controversy; and consequently the subject needs some remarks.

The words in our version: *Unto two thousand and three hundred days* are, in the original Hebrew, expressed in this manner: "Unto evening-morning two thousand three hundred." The doubt has fallen upon עֶרֶב בֹּקֶר, *evening-morning*; for some have understood it as meaning the evening and morning תָּמִיד, i. e. the constant sacrifice offered, morning and evening, in such a way that each of these is to be separately included in the number 2300; so that, in fact, only 1150 days are in reality designated. What increases the difficulty of deciding is, that exactly such a phraseology no where else occurs in the holy Scriptures. Yet there are cases which bear some analogy to



this, in the Hebrew ; there is a very close analogy also to this mode of expression in the Greek ; and the nature of the events described in the context may help us, moreover, to form some proper opinion in respect to the meaning of the peculiar phrase before us.

Nothing is more common in Hebrew, than the repetition of the *same word*, either in order to denote *intensity* of number, power, quality, etc. ; or else to denote *distribution*. As specimens of the first kind, the reader may consult Gen. 14: 10. Ex. 8: 14. 2 K. 3: 16. Joel 3: 14 ; of the second, Gen. 32: 16. Num. 17: 2. Ezek. 24: 6. Gen. 7: 9. But these usages do not bear directly on our present difficulty ; for בָּקָרָב בְּקָרָב presents us with two *different* words ; which moreover are without any conjunction between them. On this latter circumstance stress has been laid by some critics, who aver that *distribution* is meant to be designated by the form of expression (without ׀ conjunction), so that in reality only half the number of days, = 1150, is meant. But on the circumstance that the Vav conjunction is omitted, it would seem that stress of this kind cannot well be laid. In cases where the repetition of the same noun denotes the conjunct idea of *all, each, every*, e. g. שָׁנָה שָׁנָה *each year* or *every year*, sometimes the Vav is omitted, and sometimes it is inserted ; for examples of omission, see Deut. 14: 12. 2 K. 17: 29. Ps. 69: 5. Num. 9: 10 ; yet Vav is inserted in Ezra 10: 4. Ps. 87: 5. Esth. 3: 4. Deut. 32: 7, and many other cases, without any seeming difference of sense. If any thing is to be argued from the *omission* of the copula, it would seem to be, that the two words thus brought together, are to be considered as a kind of *compound* word. So Gesenius, Lehrgeb. p. 519. Indeed it would be quite natural, in case the writer did design that the two words should be separately considered, so that each of them

should be reckoned as a constituent part of the 2300, to put a Vav between them. Thus where absolute severalty is intended between nouns repeated, the copula Vav is always inserted; e. g. Deut. 25: 13. Ps. 12: 3. 1 Chron. 12: 38. So where the two words עָרַב and בֹּקֶר come together, and each is designed to be separately considered or counted, the copula is put between; e. g. in 1 Chron. 16: 40. 2 Chron. 2: 3. 31: 3. Ezra 3: 3. Jerome says, that, in the case before us, "*vespere et mane successionem diei noctisque significat*," i. e. *evening* and *morning* signifies the succession of day and night. Indeed the whole seems plain when referred to Gen. 1., where *the evening* and *the morning* constitute *one day*, Gen. 1: 5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. That the writer had the usage in his mind which these last cited passages develope, seems plain from the order in which he has placed the words, viz. by making *evening* to precede morning, because it began the day among the Hebrews. And in the same manner the Greeks put the two parts of the day together, in their *νυχθήμερα* (see 2 Cor. 11: 25), in order fully and emphatically to designate one complete day. That this is the simple object of the expression now under examination, I cannot well doubt. The principal support of those who regard the 2300 as designating the *offerings* of the morning and the evening, and so as marking only 1150 whole days, is derived from the supposition that תָּמִיד is necessarily implied before the expression עָרַב בֹּקֶר. Yet in v. 26 such an addition is neither made, nor admissible before these words. On the whole, then, we must consider these 2300 *evening-mornings* as an expression of simple time reckoned in the Hebrew manner. So Gesenius, Rosenmueller, Hävernicks, and others.

The termination or *terminus ad quem* of these is given in the closing phrase: *Then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.*

The original Hebrew here, וַיִּצְדַּק קֹדֶשׁ, might afford room for some doubt as to the true meaning. The word קֹדֶשׁ, rendered *sanctuary*, has no article, (we should naturally expect one if it has this meaning); and the verb צָדַק appropriately means *to justify*. But this verb also means *to put right, to restore*, viz. that which is in a defective or wrong state; and so it may not unnaturally be employed here to designate the *restoration* of the temple or sanctuary to its proper state or condition. (This was done by Judas Maccabaeus, as we have seen above, on the 25th of Dec. 165 B. C. Counting back from this, as the *terminus ad quem* of the 2300 days, we come to Aug. 5th of the year 171 B. C. What are the events of this year, then, which correspond to that which is said to be done from and after the commencement of the period in question ?

In vs. 9—12 of the context, we are informed of what was to be done. "The little horn," i. e. Antiochus Epiphanes, "waxed great, and magnified itself," i. e. extended itself, "to the host of heaven, and cast down to the ground some of the host, even of the stars, and trampled upon them. Even to the prince of the host did it magnify itself, and by it was the daily sacrifice removed, and the dwelling place of the sanctuary was cast down." Here, it will be perceived, the aggressions of Antiochus commence with his attack upon the priests of the temple, called *the host of heaven*, but specifically upon the high priest, who is called *the prince of the host*. These are the leading facts which characterize the doings of Antiochus, from and after the beginning of the 2300 days. The profanation of the temple and the taking away of the daily sacrifice follow on, very naturally, in the sequel. Does history present us with any thing that happened in the year 171 B. C., which corresponds with the representation in Daniel ?

Menelaus had, by his artifices and by bribery, obtained

a nomination to be high-priest in the room of his excellent elder brother, Onias III. Antiochus Epiphanes had promised this office to Menelaus, and he expected a large sum of money for so doing. But Menelaus was tardy in the payment of the stipulated sum, and was summoned before Antiochus in order to answer for his delay. At his departure he substituted Lysimachus in his place ad interim; who, being urged by Antiochus and Menelaus, rifled the temple of its golden vessels, and sold them in order to pay the tribute exacted. Menelaus himself was kept in his office by Antiochus, merely because he had promised the king still larger sums of money in the way of tribute. In the mean time, Onias III., the elder brother and lawful high-priest, sternly rebuked Menelaus for his sacrilege; and soon after, at the instigation of the same Menelaus, Onias was allured from his retreat at Daphne, whither he had fled for safety after rebuking his brother, and was murdered by Andronicus, the vice-gerent of Antiochus who had gone to suppress a rebellion in Cilicia. The Jews at Jerusalem, being highly offended with the profanation of the temple and the sacrilege of Lysimachus who acted under the orders of Antiochus, rose in rebellion against Lysimachus and the Syrian forces who protected him, and cut off both this fraudulent administrator himself and the guards by which he was surrounded. (Well might the prophet say then of the Syrian power or *little horn*, that it *magnified itself against the prince of the host*.)

Here commenced a series of aggressions upon the priesthood and temple and city of the Jews, which, with occasional interruptions, continued down to the death of Antiochus, as before described. The difference, however, between this period of 2300 days and the other periods, viz., "time, times and half a time" = 1260 days, the 1290 days,



and the 1335 days, is very plain and striking. There were, during the latter three periods (excepting the very close of the last), no interruptions of the tyrannical and overbearing power of Antiochus. But any one who follows closely the history of the whole 2300 days, will see that frequent and long-continued interruptions of active oppression took place, during the former half of these. It is evidently the design of the writer, in Dan. viii., to characterize the whole of the violent interpositions and assaults of Antiochus; and so he extends back his descriptions to a period which embraces the whole of his actual and grievous oppression. The tyrannical procedure, begun in the latter half of the year 171 B. C. as we have seen, was *occasionally* continued by the murder of the Jewish ambassadors at Tyre in 170; by the subsequent slaughter and captivity of 80,000 Hebrews in the same year, and also by the profanation and rifling of the temple. In the year 169, Antiochus was wholly occupied with his war upon Egypt; but in 168 B. C. Apollonius, by order of Antiochus, took possession of Jerusalem and the temple, after which, for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, was an *entire* suspension of sacred rites and holy feasts.

Thus we find, upon due examination of ancient history, that all the times thus far specified in the book of Daniel may be easily and naturally interpreted according to their plain and obvious sense. And inasmuch as the writer has not given us the least intimation that they are to be otherwise interpreted, what can be plainer in hermeneutics, than that the obvious sense of the words which designate time is to be followed? If this principle be not reasonable and certain, I know not where to find one within the whole circle of exegesis which is.

Only one period more is named in the book of Daniel, viz., the *seventy weeks* in Dan. 9: 24—27. It would occu-

py too great a portion of the present disquisition, to go into a minute investigation of this passage. Indeed it would require a volume of considerable magnitude even to give a history of the ever varying and contradictory opinions of critics respecting this *locus vexatissimus*, and perhaps a still larger one to establish an exegesis which would stand. But without reference to this, it may be truly said at present, that the time specified here is wholly unlike to any thing in the Apocalypse, and therefore can have no distinct bearing upon the present discussion. All that is necessary to be said now concerning this passage, has already been said in the preceding pages; and to these I must refer the reader.

Before we take leave, however, of the book of Daniel, to which appeal is so often and confidently made by interpreters who make 1260 days in the Apocalypse to stand for so many years, we must advert to the reference made to this book in two of the Gospels, by which, it is said, an occult or secondary sense is attributed to some passages, which have already been explained above as having reference only to Antiochus Epiphanes.

The passages in question are in Matt. 24: 15 and Mark 13: 14. The first runs thus: "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (let him who readeth consider!) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, etc." The second is of the like tenor: "When ye shall see the abomination of desolation, [spoken of by Daniel the prophet], standing where it ought not, (let him who readeth consider!) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, etc." In this last passage from Mark, the clause included in brackets is marked as of a suspicious character by Knapp, and is given up in the main by most recent critics. Even Hengstenberg, in his

efforts to show that the prophecy of Daniel is applied in a *direct* way, by the Saviour, to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, still gives up the suspected clause in Mark ; pp. 258, 267, of his *Aechtheit des Daniel*. But with me this makes no important difference. All the copies of Matthew exhibit the reading in question ; and the testimony of one evangelist should be enough for any one who believes in the divine inspiration of the Gospels.

The simple question before us is : Whether the Saviour has applied the prediction in Daniel respecting the  $\text{מְשִׁיחַ מְשִׁיחַ}$  (*abomination of desolation*) to the *Romans*, and thus shown that we are not to apply it, or at least not to apply it exclusively, to Antiochus Epiphanes ?

There are three passages in Daniel, where the phraseology in question, or nearly the same, is employed. These are Dan. 11: 31. 12: 11, and 9: 27. Hengstenberg himself gives up the two former, as being applicable, and as always having been applied in ancient times, to Antiochus. Indeed the case is so plain, that no one can safely venture on denying it. He strives however with much earnestness, to show that the phrase in Dan. 9: 27 is that which the Saviour quotes and applies to the Romans. But of this many doubts might be raised. The form of the Hebrew here serves of itself to excite some doubt. It runs thus :  $\text{עַל כִּנְהָ שְׂקִיזִים מְשִׁיחַ}$ , which in the Septuagint is rendered (and also by Theodotion) : *Ἐπὶ τὸ ἱερὸν βδέλυγμα τῶν ἐρημώσεων*, evidently showing a different reading of the ancient Hebrew text, or else a palpable mistake of the translator. It can hardly be supposed that Matthew and Mark, or that the Saviour, borrowed the simple expression *βδέλυγμα τῆς ἐρημώσεως* from such an almost senseless version as that of the Seventy as given above. In the Hebrew just quoted,  $\text{שְׂקִיזִים}$  is not in regimen or the construct state ; nor does  $\text{מְשִׁיחַ}$  assume the article, which, as

being specific, it would naturally do here if it were in the Genitive. Every thing in the form, manner, and (as I must believe) object of the Hebrew phrase here, forbids us to suppose that Matt. 24: 15 and Mark 13: 14 are built upon this. Indeed if they are, the original application of Dan. 9: 27 to the *Romans* might still be called in question. The contents of the verse seem almost irresistibly to remind us of Antiochus, as described in Dan. 7: 25. 8: 9—12. 11: 31, 45. 12: 11. I must conclude, therefore, that the *βδέλυγμα ἐξημώσεως* in Matthew and Mark refers to Dan. 11: 31 or 12: 11; in either of which cases it must originally have designated Antiochus.

Thus much I feel compelled to acknowledge, on the simple grounds of criticism; although the admission apparently makes against the cause which I am now advocating; or at least it *seems* to concede a *ὑπόνοια* in the passages last referred to. Does it necessarily imply one?

The general principle of exegesis on such ground has been discussed above, and need not be here renewed. It is enough for the present to say, that the application of the phraseology in question (so far as it belongs to the book of Daniel) to the wasting of Jerusalem by the Romans, no more proves that such was the original object of Daniel's words, than the application of Hos. 11: 1 to the exile of the child Jesus in Egypt, by Matthew in chap. 11. 15, proves that Hosea 11: 1 was originally a *prediction* respecting the exile of Jesus. It is not in fact a *prediction* at all, in any sense, but simply a historical declaration. But then, how natural and even appropriate for Matthew to say, that the words of Hosea: "I have called my Son out of Egypt," found a *πλήρωσις* in the sojourn of God's greater Son there, and in his recal from that country! A certain event happened in ancient times, viz., the calling of God's *Son* (collectively taken for the Israelites) out of Egyptian exile; a



like event had recently taken place, when the Son of God in a higher and nobler sense was called out of exile in the same country. Was there not now a *πλήρωσις* of the ancient declaration of the prophet, such as would compel almost every mind to feel the congruity of adapting that declaration to the recent events?

So is it, surely, with the case of Rachel weeping for her children, as described in Jer. 31: 15, and applied by the prophet to the exile of the Jews; while Matthew (2: 17, 18) applies it to the massacre by Herod of the infants who were in the town of Bethlehem.

✓ Perhaps even more than half of the *fulfilments* (*πληρώσεις*), spoken of in the New Testament, are of the like character. Why not apply this simple and well known principle, this obvious usage of the New Testament writers, to the passage under discussion, in which reference is made to the book of Daniel? I can see no good reason why they may not be so applied. But if this be allowed, the amount of the reference in the Gospels to Daniel is, that he is appealed to as having described a waster of the temple and city of Jerusalem in ancient times, of the like character and intention as the waster who finally destroyed Jerusalem. What then took place had a *πλήρωσις* now, i. e. the like thing happened in a still higher sense. And why may we not interpret these passages in the same way as we feel compelled to interpret so many others? In fact it seems to me, 9 that the Saviour, or the Evangelist, (it is difficult to say *which* speaks in the passage to be cited, and matters not for our purpose), appears to have warned the reader by the parenthetic *ὁ ἀναγινώσκων νοεῖτω* (*let him who readeth consider*), that the original words of the prophet were not intended to have such an application as is made of them by the interpreters in question, but only that they described events of altogether a similar nature. As of old, when Antiochus in-

vaded Jerusalem and the temple, the pious Jews fled into the wilderness, so now, when the Roman power invades Judea with purposes of destruction, Christians should flee to the mountains, etc.

Viewed in this light, (and I am persuaded this is the light in which the passages before us ought to be viewed), these declarations of Jesus do not establish the position, that we ought not to apply the passages in Daniel according to the plain historical manner in which I have applied them. In vain do we seek in the book of Daniel, then, any justification for interpreting *1260 days* as meaning *1260 years*; or any justification for interpreting any of the times specified there in a manner contrary to, or different from, their natural and obvious meaning.

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COME WE THEN, AT LAST, TO THE APOCALYPSE ITSELF. Here is perhaps more difficulty than in the interpretation of Daniel; but still we must travel in the same road as before, and see if we can find solutions which are satisfactory. This I apprehend may be done if we continue to regard only the simple principles of interpretation.

But before we undertake to do this, I must beg the reader's attention to a few simple yet very important facts, in regard to the tenor and object of the Apocalypse. I cannot here discuss the topics which I am now about to suggest at length, nor attempt the vindication of my views by appeal to all the minute particulars which the book of Revelation exhibits, and which might serve to confirm them. This must be reserved for another work of a more copious nature than the present, and where a more ample discussion than the present would naturally find an appropriate

place. I must, however, beg the reader's earnest attention to the following suggestions, and entreat him at least to examine and well consider them, before he decides against the views that may be proffered in the sequel.

✓ (1) It lies upon the face of the Apocáypse, from beginning to end, *that it was written in the midst of a bitter and bloody persecution of the church.* The writer himself is in exile "on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus;" and the persons whom he addresses are exposed or speedily to be exposed, to all the hardships, perils, and temptations, which result from persecution. Of course his object is to guard, to guide, to fortify, and to console Christians in such circumstances; and never did a writer cleave more fully to his purpose, or execute it more effectually. The glorious rewards of those who persevere; the speedy and condign punishment of persecutors; the ultimate and certain triumph of the church over all her enemies; the universal spread of Christianity over the earth; and the eternal happiness of all the faithful in the kingdom of God above; are unfolded on the pages of the Apocáypse, and stand there deeply engraven in characters of light. He who runneth, may read.

It follows now, from the plain and evident intention and object of the writer, that the book before us must consist of matter appropriate to its design. If we deny or overlook this, we must of course involve the writer in the charge of having failed to execute his purpose, or of having executed it in a feeble or unsatisfactory manner.

✓ Should we suppose, then, as many have done, that the Apocáypse is a kind of Syllabus of civil history, or of civil and ecclesiastical history, disclosing the leading events that are to take place down to the end of time among nations and kingdoms, nothing can be more plain, than that we should assign to it an object totally foreign to what was

appropriate to the time and circumstances of both writer and reader. I am aware that the very first verse of the Revelation proclaims the design of the book to be, "to show to the servants of Christ the things that must come to pass." But *what things?* The context and sequel of the book must answer this question. The Apocalypse is no dissertation *de Omni Scibili*. It has an appropriate and limited object; and this is, to show the servants of God the certain triumph of the cause in which they were engaged, and to hold out the glorious reward consequent upon being faithful unto death.

That I am correct in this position, I think no one will seriously call in question, who reads the book through, with his mind unembarrassed by any preconceived scheme of interpretation. And if I am correct, how is it possible to suppose, that the civil history of states and kingdoms, or of the various heresies which were to arise out of the church many centuries after the writer and all his readers were dead, are not only detailed in the book before us, but that the greater part of the book is occupied by this detail? Yet on such a supposition many a commentator upon the Revelation has built his system.

But I have not yet done with the declaration at the commencement of the book, that the object of the Revelation is "to show the servants of Christ what must come to pass." Many, I am aware, have stopped short with this single consideration, and endeavored to justify their syllabus of civil and ecclesiastical history thereby. But there is another most important circumstance attending this declaration, which needs to be noted. This is,

(2) That *the things to come to pass* are those, which are  
SHORTLY TO COME TO PASS.

I cannot stop here to examine how often the repeated declarations of this book to this purpose have been over-



looked, or the force of them evaded by ingenious conjecture. Most expositors have indeed made too little of these direct and positive declarations; but a few, such as Wetstein, Herder, and some others, have made too much. There is a medium; nor is it difficult, as I apprehend the matter, to discover what it is. The great body of the work appears to me, beyond any well-grounded doubt, to have reference to events *speedily to take place*, or at least *speedily to commence taking place*; for the second catastrophe is a prolonged one, as may be seen in Rev. xvi.—xix. A very small portion of the work, e. g. chap. xx. xxi., has respect most plainly to the *distant* future. This is what the nature of the case would seem to require, and this too is what the nature of the expressions under consideration admits. More or less than this would not be compatible with both of these.

We must here turn our special attention, for a few moments, to the further development of the declarations in question. In Rev. 1: 1, the writer says, that God gave to Christ the Revelation, “in order to show his servants what should take place *ἐν τάχει*, *speedily, quickly*.” In 1: 3, the author solemnly declares, that what is written in this book is of speedy accomplishment: *Ὁ καιρὸς ἐγγύς*, *the time is near*, i. e. the time when what is revealed will be accomplished. Thus much in the prologue to the book. The epilogue repeats three several times the equivalent declaration: *Behold I come quickly!* 22: 7, 12, 20. The *coming* of Christ is the main subject of the book; so that the declaration here is, that what the book contains will speedily be accomplished.

That such must be the meaning, is evident by appeal to similar declarations in Rev. 2: 16. 3: 11, and 11: 14. No one can doubt, that what is said is what is meant, in these last cases. As little reasonable doubt can there be, if

philology is to be trusted, in the cases just cited from the prologue and epilogue of the book.

What tolerable meaning now can be given, and defended on exegetical grounds, to the declarations in question, if we suppose that the main portion of the book relates to events some thousand and more of years then future? And if every writer is to be permitted the liberty of explaining his own purpose, why should we refuse to John the liberty that we concede to all others? ✓

But still, one more consideration is to be taken into view, to which I have already alluded. 'This is, that a very small portion of the book, (strictly considered only chap. xx., for the sequel is mere expansion of a part of this), has respect to the *distant future*. So plain is this distant future here brought into view that no explanation or defence of this position is needed. Of course some modification of the expressions, *coming to pass quickly* and *coming quickly*, is necessary. But here is no difficulty. The great mass of the book respects events in reality to be completed speedily, or speedily to commence being completed. On these the writer dwells at length, and spreads them out from chap. 6: 1 to chap. 19: 21. Of the *distant future* he gives nothing more than a few rapid glances. In describing the *new heavens* and the *new earth* he is indeed more copious; but this is a delightful theme, and is not properly *prediction*, but description which is intended for the very purpose of creating emotion in the breast of his readers. ✓

Thus considered, all harmonizes. We admit the full force of the declarations, that a *speedy* accomplishment of what is said, i. e. of the great portion of what is said, will take place. We interpret the words of the writer in a straight-forward manner, without resort to any subterfuges, without at all explaining away the writer's words. We

extend the *briefness* of time for accomplishment, to every thing in the book which in its nature is susceptible of such an application. More cannot reasonably be asked; less cannot reasonably be assumed; for every writer should be left, so far as may be, to explain himself.

(3) It would seem to follow from the positions thus laid down, that we are at liberty, or rather that we are obliged, if possible, to seek for a fulfilment of the predictions in the main body of the Apocalypse, within a time which is not far distant from the period when the book was written. If such a fulfilment can be found as coincides with the periods named in the Apocalypse, then what good reason can be offered why we should reject it? Or rather: *Why are we not exegetically obliged to admit it?*

That there are some designations of time in the Apocalypse, which are to be *symbolically* taken, i. e. which, though definitely expressed, are not meant to be urged by the reader in the literal shape, all, I suppose, will concede. For example; in Rev. 2: 10 it is said to the church at Smyrna, that "the devil would cast some of them into prison, that they might be tried and afflicted for *ten days*." That a short period merely, but not a strictly definite one, is here meant, will be generally admitted. If the reader wishes to see how the scriptural writers can employ the number *ten* in such a kind of way, he may compare 1 Sam. 25: 38. Neh. 5: 18. Jer. 42: 7. Dan. 1: 12, 14. Acts 25: 6, al.; where he may find examples to this purpose. The mind naturally prefers a *definite* time, as being more emphatic; hence *ten days* may well be taken for a short, but really indefinite, period. We may compare with such a usage the Latin *sex centies* (six hundred times), which, in the like way, means a large and indefinite number of times.

It is scarcely necessary to mention, that *hour of trial*, in Rev. 3: 10, means *season of trial*; and such is the mean-

as explicit. on the hand John  
(Petry.)

ing of the word *hour* oftentimes in the Old Testament and in the New.

Once more; in Rev. 9: 10 it is said, that the army of locusts from the abyss, commissioned to inflict wounds upon men like those of scorpions, "should have power to injure men *five months*." Now as the natural locust makes his appearance about the commencement of May, and departs about the close of September, it would seem quite plain that the writer has had regard to this, in the limitation of the period during which the locusts from the abyss are to torment men. The design plainly seems to be, to indicate that they shall torment them only for a *short period*, like to that in which the natural locusts consume the productions of the earth. Of course, a period strictly definite does not appear to be here designated; for plainly such cannot have been the writer's design. We may therefore reckon this among those cases, in which the use of numbers is to be understood in a tropical way. All attempts to show that a day for a year is meant here, would be nugatory; for to what can 150 years in this case be applied? Equally nugatory is it to attempt the making out of any valid proof, that the exact literal *five months* is here to be insisted on. Any series of *historical facts*, which would accord well with the account of the ravages of the locusts as here described, never has been, and in my apprehension never can be, satisfactorily made out. The whole is poetic tropical description, intended to show the aggravated punishment which the persecutors of Christianity will receive.

But the designations of time in the Apocalypse, about which there is any important controversy, may be found in chap. XI.—XIII., and in chap. XX. The latter, however, stands by itself; our principal concern is with the former.

In Rev. 11: 2, it is predicted that "the Gentiles shall



✓ tread under foot the holy city, *forty and two months*," which are equal to  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years or 1260 days. That *Jerusalem* is here meant, the very epithet given to it (holy city) shows; or if this should be questioned, v. 8th settles the controversy, for it names the city as *the place where our Lord was crucified*. Besides; the temple of God that was to be measured (11: 1), was there; and in chap. vii., the 144,000 who are to be sealed, and thus exempted from impending evils, are all selected from the twelve tribes of Israel. Declarations such as these must identify the objects of chastisement in view by the writer, in all which he has disclosed in chap. v.—xi., viz. the destruction of the Jewish persecuting power. Jerusalem, as being the metropolis, is, as often in the Old Testament, made the symbol or representative of the whole country or nation. The reader needs only to be reminded, how often Zion and Jerusalem stand, in prophetic language, as the representatives of the Jewish government, polity, land, and nation, in order to accede to the position, that the *capitals* in the Apocalypse are to be considered as the symbols of the *country* and of the *government* to which they belong.

2 When John therefore predicts, in Rev. 11: 2, that "the holy city shall be trodden under foot 42 months," this of course involves the idea, that the country of which the holy city is the capital, is also trodden under foot. To make their way to the capital, a foreign enemy, coming (as the Romans did) from the north, must have overrun a great portion of Palestine antecedently to the capture of Jerusalem. The prediction of course includes both, inasmuch as the *holy city* is made the representative of the country at large.

✓ I understand this prediction as being in substance the same as that in Matt. xxiv., and in the parallel passages of the other Evangelists. The consummation is related in

Rev. xi. of the event for which preparation had been making; which preparation the Apocalyptist exhibits in chap. v.—x. Let us now resort to history, and see what the result of inquiry respecting *facts* will be.

Previous to the final outbreak of a general war between the Jews and Romans, there had been often repeated tumults and partial insurrections, and a state of great disquiet and insecurity for some time, but especially were all these things greatly augmented in A. D. 66; all of which corresponds well with the descriptions in the Evangelists and in Rev. v.—x. At length, in Oct. of A. D. 66, Cestius, the Roman Prefect of Syria, moved by the tumults of the Jews, laid siege to Jerusalem, and captured the lower part of the city; but after a few days he abandoned this enterprise and retreated. The inquiet state of things in Palestine being made known to Nero at Rome, during the winter that followed, he sent Vespasian and Titus his son, to subdue and punish the Jews. In the spring of the following year (A. D. 67), Vespasian having collected his troops, made a descent, early in the month of May, upon Galilee. The attack upon Palestine having thus commenced, it was continued thenceforth with unabated fury, until the city of Jerusalem and temple were taken and utterly destroyed, early in Aug. A. D. 70. And although the war was still carried on, after this, against several small fortresses here and there, yet it was considered as substantially at an end, by the capture of Jerusalem; and such was indeed the fact, for Titus and the main part of his army soon left the country.

Here then are the 42 months in question, with the variations at most of only a few days, or possibly weeks. The time when the imperial power of Rome, i. e. Nero, made a formal declaration of war against Judea, and commissioned Vespasian and his son to execute his hostile de-

termination, may be fairly taken as the *terminus a quo* of the Jewish war ; for all that had preceded was but temporary and local insurrection on the part of the Jews, and was resisted only by the subordinate authority and power of the Prefect of the province. This commission appears to have been given in the latter part of the winter of A. D. 67 ; for we find that Vespasian, who repaired to Antioch after receiving it, in order to collect his troops, was not ready to march upon Judea until some time in the month of May of the same year. If we suppose now that the former part of February was the month when war was declared, or the commission made out, we shall find that three years and six months elapsed, between this period and the taking of Jerusalem and destroying it, on the 10th of Aug. A. D. 70.

During this period, the disciples of Christ, giving heed to the warning of their divine Master (Matt. 24: 16—22), fled from Palestine, and retreated to the wilderness-country east of the Jordan ; thus fulfilling, as we shall have occasion to remark in the sequel, the period of flight for safety to the wilderness, which is attributed to the woman (the church), in Rev. 12: 6, 14.

Another period mentioned in Rev. 11: 3 is of the same extent as that which has already been examined, and contemporaneous with it. It was foretold by the Saviour, in Matt. 24: 9—13, that, during the aggressive war made upon Judea, the spirit of persecution against Christians would rage in an unwonted manner, and many of his disciples perish. Such was indeed the case. The fury of the Zealot-party was without bounds, when the rage of war had enkindled all their violent passions. Although the great mass of Christians fled from before them and the Romans, so as to save their lives, yet all did not and could not retreat. Many remained in their country, faithful con-

fessors of Christianity even unto death. Against these *witnesses* (see Rev. 11: 3) or martyrs, the great body of the Jews are represented as arraying themselves, in Rev. 11: 3—12, and as persecuting them unto death. For a while, the miraculous powers of some of the Christian teachers overawed their malignant enemies, Rev. 11: 5, 6. But at last the faithful witnesses were destroyed. The period of consummating this destruction is limited, however, in the same manner as that of the subjugation of Palestine. During all the Romish invasion the spirit of hostility was active; and yet persecution unto death did not root out Christianity. It continued rising, it triumphed; for “the blood of martyrs was the seed of the church.”

The destruction of Jerusalem put an end of course to the Jewish persecuting power in Judea. Consequently the period in which Christianity becomes triumphant over persecution there, is contemporaneous with the destruction of Jerusalem. Nothing can be more clear, than that the period of the two witnesses is the same as that of “treading the holy city under foot by the Gentiles,” Rev. 11: 2, 3. *Two* witnesses, and but two, are specified, as we may very naturally suppose, because “by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word is established.”

The sum of Rev. xi. is, then, that the Romans would invade and tread down Palestine for  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, and that Christians, during that period, would be bitterly persecuted and slain; but still, that, after the same period, the persecution would cease there, and the religion of Jesus become triumphant. The words of the Saviour in Matt. xxiv. compared with the tenor of Rev. xi., seem to lead us plainly and safely to these conclusions. And in these we may acquiesce, because historical facts are before us, which serve to show, that the forty-two months or 1260 days are to be understood in their plain and obvious sense.



We may now come to the other periods, named in Rev. XII. XIII. The writer of the Apocalypse here passes to the second great catastrophe in his august drama, and commences it with a proem which is *regressive*. The woman clothed with the sun, and having under her feet the moon and stars, is a symbol of the church all glorious and resplendent in the eyes of God and all his faithful servants. The man-child who is born, and who is "to rule all nations with a sceptre of iron" (Ps. 2: 9. Rev. 12: 5), is doubtless the *Messiah*. The dragon ready to devour him at his birth, reminds us of Herod's attempt to massacre the infant Saviour at Bethlehem, when moved to such a deed by the great adversary of Christianity. *The child caught up unto God*, is the Saviour ascended to glory. The flight of the woman to the desert, for 1260 days, at a period subsequent to this (comp. vs. 5, 6), is a symbol of the church fleeing from the invading Romans and persecuting Jews, during the subjugation of Palestine. At Pella in the wilderness, beyond the Jordan, the Christians of Judea found safety and freedom, Rev. 12: 6, 14. The latter of these two verses designates again the same period of retreat and safety as the sixth verse, but in a different way, viz., it is designated (after the manner of Dan. 7: 25. 12: 7) by the expression *time and times and half a time*, Rev. 12: 14. When this period expires, then the church is freed from the desolating power in Palestine; as it was, of old, freed from the like power in the days of Antiochus Epiphanes. The similarity of events in the two cases, gives occasion to adopt the same language in respect to the continuance of both.

✓ Only one more period of the like extent remains. It is that designated in Rev. 13: 5; where it is said of the beast which rises up out of the sea, that he should have power to persecute *during forty-two months*. Who this beast

was, we cannot, after the explanations given in Rev. xvii. well doubt. *The persecuting power of imperial Rome, and specially that power as exercised by NERO*, is, beyond all reasonable question, symbolized by the beast in question. ✓

The first position here, viz., that the persecuting power of pagan Rome is symbolized, will hardly be called in question. But *the particular reference to Nero* may not improbably be questioned; and, therefore, a few words in respect to this will not be out of place.

To the beast is assigned *seven heads and ten horns*, Rev. 13: 1. That the seven heads represent so many kings or emperors, (for both were called βασιλεῖς by the Greeks), is certain from the explanation given in Rev. xvii. 10: "The seven heads . . . are seven kings." But in the language of the Apocalyptist, the beast stands not only as a symbol of the *imperial power* of Rome, generically considered, but frequently for that power as exercised by some individual king or emperor, e. g. Nero. Such is the usage in chap. xiii. xvii., and occasionally elsewhere. It is important to note this; for otherwise the reader may be easily misled. Whenever the *beast* is distinguished from the seven heads, it then is employed as a *generic* symbol of the imperial power; but when particular and specific actions or qualities of a personal and distinctive nature are predicated of the beast, it designates the imperial power as individually exercised, e. g. by Nero.

That Nero was in the exercise of this power when John wrote the Apocalypse, seems to be quite plain from Rev. xvii. 10: "Five [kings] are fallen; one is; the other has not yet come, but when he shall come, he will continue but a short time." The *five fallen* are Julius Caesar, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Of course *Nero* is the sixth; and he is therefore the one *who now is*. Galba, who reigned but seven months, makes the seventh. ✓

Some recent commentators indeed, e. g. Ewald, Lücke, and some others, begin to count with Augustus, and end with Otho; but this was not the usual method of reckoning among either the Romans or the Jews, (as I hope to show elsewhere); for, that they usually reckoned in the manner above stated, may be seen in Suetonius' *Twelve Caesars*. So also in Orac. Sybill. V. 12. 4 Ezra 12: 15. Josephus, Antiq. xviii. 2. 2, also xviii. 6, 10. xix. 1, 11. Chronicon Pascale, p. 533 (edit. Bonn.), also p. 360. And the same is true of some other ancient writers. This seems to fix both the date of the Apocalypse itself, and to designate the individual who exercised the power of the beast, when John wrote the Revelation.

But there are other things in the Apocalypse which serve also to characterize Nero, so as hardly to leave room for mistake. Thus in chap. xiii. 3: "[I saw] one of his heads [viz. of the beast] as it were smitten unto death; and his deadly wound was healed." Again in the explanatory part of the second catastrophe, Rev. 17: 8, the angel says to John: "The beast which thou sawest, was, and is not, and will come up from the abyss, and go to destruction; and those who dwell on the earth shall wonder, (whose names are not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world), when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and will make his appearance," (παρῆσται). Once more in Rev. xvii. 11: "And the beast which was, and is not, even he is an eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth to destruction."

To recount the efforts which have been made to interpret these passages, would of itself require somewhat of a volume. I have never seen, and cannot find, but one probable solution; and that is drawn from the history of the times, and particularly the history of what was said and generally believed respecting Nero, during his lifetime,

and even long after his death. I can give here only a mere sketch ; but this may aid the further inquiries of the reader.

It was predicted by soothsayers of Nero, early in his reign, that he would be deprived of his office, flee his country, go to the East, and there recover dominion, specially in Palestine. Many foretold, that he would eventually recover the whole of his former dominion. The passage where this is fully related, may be found in Suetonius' Nero, c. 40. .

This report was modified in the course of its diffusion, and assumed a great variety of shapes. The most usual one, by far, seems to have been, that Nero would be assassinated, receive a wound apparently deadly, recover from it, and subsequently go to the East and return from it with great power, ravage Palestine, lay waste the church, and finally re-enter Rome with fire and sword, and avenge himself of all his former enemies.

In consequence of this, the great mass of the community at that period, do not appear to have believed in the reality of Nero's death, at the time when he was assassinated. Suetonius has related (Nero, c. 57), that many even at Rome, for a long time, decked his tomb with flowers, expecting and hoping that he would revive. Moreover, in consequence of such an expectation, persons feigning themselves to be Nero, appeared in several of the distant provinces, and made great disturbances. Suetonius has told the story of such an impostor among the Parthians ; Nero, c. 7, see also Tacitus, Hist. I. 2. Tacitus has also told a similar story of another impostor in Achaia and Asia Minor, Hist. II. 8. This was in the region where the Apocalypse was written, and shows that such reports must have been familiar to John's readers. Dio Chrysostom, (a contemporary of Vespasian), in his *Oratio de Pulchritud.* (p. 371) relates, that most persons supposed Nero to be still alive.



Thus much for the belief of the heathen in general. Nor was this belief confined to them. Christians widely participated in it. Passages in abundance are to be found in parts of the Sibylline Oracles, some of which were written about A. D. 80, and others early in the second century, which show most plainly how vivid the persuasion was, that Nero would again make his appearance, notwithstanding his apparently deadly wound. The reader may find them at great length, in *Orac. Sibill.* IV. p. 520 seq. V. p. 547 seq., also p. 560 seq., p. 573 seq., p. 592 seq., p. 619 seq.; likewise in *Lib. VIII.* p. 688 seq., and p. 693 seq. (edit. Gallaeus); all written by early Christians, and expressive of their feelings and expectations. So in the oldest Commentary on the Apocalypse which is extant, viz. that of Victorinus († 303), it is said that ‘Nero was the beast who received the deadly wound,’ *Rev.* 13: 3. Lactantius adverts to the opinion, in his time, that Nero would yet make his reappearance, *De Morte Persecut.* c. 2.; and Sulpitius Severus, the ecclesiastical historian, near the close of the third century, adverts to the same expectation; *Hist. Sac.* II. 28. II. 29. *Dial.* II. So late as Augustine’s time (about A. D. 400), we find the same views still cherished, *August. De Civit. Dei*, XX. 19.

The question is not now, at least with me it is not, whether the writer of the Apocalypse did himself participate in this vulgar belief respecting Nero’s reappearance. I have no apprehension that he cherished such views as these; certainly not, if he were (as I believe) an inspired man. My apprehension is, that in describing the beast, i. e. Nero, instead of calling him by name, (which would have been, in connection with what he said, a treasonable offence), he has adverted to him as the person respecting whom the reports in question were current, and purposely adverted to him in such a way, in order that his readers might easily know who was meant.

Several circumstances serve to confirm this view of the case. After describing the beast *whose deadly wound was healed*, in Rev. 13: 3—8, he adds immediately: "If any man has an ear, let him hear," i. e. let the reader very attentively consider who is meant in this case. He then subjoins: "If any one leads into exile, he shall go away into exile;" Rev. 13: 10. In other words: 'He of whom I have been speaking, is the individual who exiles Christians; but mark well! He shall himself speedily be exiled.' In chap. xvii., the effort to guide his readers and put them on their guard against an erroneous construction of his words, is still more visible. After speaking of "the beast which was, and is not, and will come up from the abyss," he exclaims: *Ὁδὲ ὁ νοῦς ὁ ἔχων σοφίαν, here is a meaning which comprises wisdom.*" In other words; some special sagacity is needed in the interpretation of this passage.

By speaking in this way does not John show, that he does not expect his words, i. e. his description of the beast, to be understood as if he employed them simply to express his own individual belief, but only that he introduces upon the scene the person of whom such things are reported, viz., such as that his deadly wound is healed, and that he will again resume his imperial power?

Is there any more difficulty in such a supposition, than there is when the Saviour says to the Pharisees: "If I cast out demons by Beelzebub, *by whom do your sons cast them out?*" Matt. 12: 27. Is there any more, than when Jesus speaks of "unclean spirits as *walking through desert places*, seeking rest and finding none?" Matt. 12: 43. In both cases the popular opinion is cited, without any remark whether it is true or untrue. The speaker had another and different purpose in view. So here; John's object was secretly to intimate to his readers, who was

meant by *the beast*; and in order to accomplish this object, he has repeated those things which popular rumour had spread abroad respecting him, or at least alluded to them. But, as I have already noted, he has taken care in each case, to give a caution to his readers how they interpret this, or what use they make of it. On any other ground, why should these cautions be inserted in these particular places, and omitted in all the other symbolical parts of the Apocalypse?

If the reader is satisfied with me that John might describe Nero in this way, it will be easy to show him how well the description comports with the substance of the common rumour. According to this, Nero was to be assassinated, and to receive a wound apparently deadly, and yet to recover from it. So says Rev. 13: 3, "One of the heads [i. e. Nero] was smitten as it were unto death, and yet his deadly wound was healed." What can be more exact? To detail the widely diverse, contradictory, and ineffectual efforts that have been made to explain and apply this in a different way, would occupy too much time here, and therefore be incompatible with my design. The most ingenious among them is that of Bertholdt, who supposes Julius Caesar (who was assassinated) to have been the head that received the wound. But a conclusive objection to this is, that his wound was not healed, and that there was not any report abroad that it was healed. Another conclusive objection is, that the head which was wounded is described, in the sequel, as persecuting Christianity. This could not be true of Julius Caesar, who perished half a century before the Christian era.

Common report made Nero, after reigning a while, to disappear for some time, then to make his appearance again, as if he had come up from the region of the dead, and finally to perish. So Rev. 17: 8, "The beast which

thou sawest, was, and is not, and will come up from the abyss [the world of the dead, or the grave], and go to destruction." To the same purpose exactly is the last clause of the verse just quoted: "Beholding the beast, that he was, and is not, and will make his appearance, *παρεσται*." In v. 11 of the same chapter, a kind of paradoxical description is given of this same beast: "The beast which was, and is not, even he is an eighth, and is of the seven, and goeth to destruction." This passage resisted all the efforts of commentators, before they began to follow in the path where the history of Nero's times led them. Now it becomes comparatively easy. Nero, who at first was emperor, then was deposed and assassinated, and afterwards was, according to general belief, to appear again, would, on his reappearance, make *an eighth* (*ὄγδοος*, not *ὁ ὄγδοος*); while, at the same time, Nero had already been reckoned as one of the seven, and in fact belonged to them. If the reader will compare this part of v. 11, with the expressions "will come up from the abyss," "*καὶ παρεσται* and will make his appearance," in v. 8, he will see that all three expressions are only diverse modes of designating one and the same thing. To say that he, "who had been one of the seven," *will be an eighth*, is of course the same as to say, that he will reappear, and stand again in his former place. This, according to almost universal report and belief, Nero was expected to do.

So paradoxical are all other interpretations of this passage, or so arbitrary, so conjectural, so diverse, and therefore unsatisfactory, that one is constrained to wonder how critics could have ever acquiesced in them. But in the interpretation of any book, where the reins are given without check to fancy and imagination, difficulties of this kind are leaped over instead of being removed.

Enough to show the probability, I might almost say the



certainly, that Nero is aimed at in this part of the Apocalypse. This supposed, all the difficulties of the writer's language appear to be solved, and every thing moves on harmoniously.

We return then to our principal theme, viz. the designations of time in the book before us.

To the beast which we have now endeavoured to describe, "is given power to do [his will] *forty and two months*;" Rev. 13: 5. The context shows that the *power* and *will* in question have respect to the persecuting of Christians. Bitter and bloody was this persecution; but it was to last only  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years.

Turn we now to the pages of history, and we shall find that Nero commenced his horrible persecution of Christians, about the middle or in the latter part of Nov. A. D. 64. All agree that this persecution ended immediately on the death of Nero; and this took place on the day that Galba entered Rome and was proclaimed emperor, i. e. on the 9th of June, A. D. 68. Here then is the often repeated and peculiar period of  $3\frac{1}{2}$  years, being only a few days of excess beyond that measure of time. By this small excess of only a few days, no one of course can be stumbled; for how is it reasonable to suppose, that in respect to a celebrated period, so often repeated and already become so famous, a statistical exactness would or could be aimed at? Enough that only a few days at most can be considered as supernumerary.

Thus becomes apparent the truth of the writer's most solemn declarations, both in his prologue and epilogue, that THE TIME IS SHORT OR NEAR, when what is predicted will take place. It is not necessary, as we have already seen, to suppose that these declarations pertain to any more than the *leading* and *essential* parts of the book; but so much as this we must suppose, in order to elicit from

them any thing like their real meaning. The views which I have given above, aim at interpreting the book in consistency with those declarations. They do so by appeal to historical facts—facts which evidently accord with the spirit and language of the book.

In order to prevent all misconception of my meaning, I must here suggest, that while the destruction of the beast is by implication predicted in Rev. 13: 5, as taking place after forty-two months, and thus relief and deliverance as being given to the church, yet the manner in which the *second* catastrophe in the Apocalypse, viz. chap. XII—XIX., is presented, makes on the whole the distinct impression, that the first routing of the beast or destruction of Nero, does not complete the *whole* of the catastrophe. Let the reader compare the 16th chap., specially the close of it, with chap. XVIII. XIX., and he will easily discern, that although the beast of John's time is destroyed, and thus the heathen persecuting power paralyzed for a time, yet the writer evidently supposes the contest not to be wholly at an end, but continued for a period which he does not limit. But the ultimate triumph of the church is certain; and so chap. XIX. represents it. The great and leading event, however, which the writer had particularly in view, viz. the end of Nero's life and persecution, was to take place *speedily*, in accordance with the declarations of the prologue and epilogue, as exhibited on p. 106 seq. above. Such a view of the subject shows us, that an indication of the protracted contest of the church with the beast, is not inconsistent with the language which John has employed in the proem of his book.

On looking back and reviewing the series of facts which have now been brought into view, it is certainly remarkable, that so many important occurrences, in the history of the Jewish and Christian church, should be limited to

3½ years or forty-two months. The wasting of Jerusalem and Palestine by Antiochus Epiphanes, and also by the Romans, continued just about the same length of time; the bitter persecution of the two witnesses, and the retreat of the woman (the church) to the wilderness, were of the same extent of time; and finally the persecution by Nero parallelizes altogether with these events, as to continuance. No wonder then, that 3½ years (i. e. half of the perfect number seven) should have become a very common limitation of events which took place, or were supposed to take place, within a moderate period of time. Thus in James 5: 17 and Luke 4: 25, it is said, that in the time of Elijah "it did not rain for the space of three years and six months;" although in 1 Kings 17: 1 seq. no limitation is assigned to the time. So the Rabbins: "He [the king of Babylon] sent Nebuzaradan, that he might lay waste Jerusalem three years and six months;" Eccha IV. 12. "Three years and a half Vespasian besieged Jerusalem;" Eccha I. 5. "Adrian besieged Bithur three years and a half;" Ecc. II. 2. "The punishment of the antediluvians, of the Egyptians, and of the impious Gog and Magog, in Gehenna, will be twelve months; that of Nebuchadnezzar and Vespasian will be 3½-years;" Ecc. I. 12. All these examples, and more which might be produced, serve to show how extensively the limitation of time now in question was employed in ancient times. It accorded with the great and well known periods of devastation, in earlier times. And such being the case, a statistical exactness cannot be reasonably supposed to be aimed at, in cases of this nature. Any near approximation to the measure of time in question, would of course be regarded as a sufficient reason for setting it down under the general rubric.

We have now gone through with all the designations of

time in the Apocalypse, which are the subjects of particular interest, excepting one. This is the famous *thousand years*, from which the *Millennium* takes its name, and which is predicted in Rev. 20: 4—7. Is this to be literally understood? Or is a *day* here to be counted for a *year*?

If it were allowable for an interpreter to give that meaning to words which would best accord with his own wishes, I should be altogether disposed to join here with those, who hold that every day in the Apocalypse stands for a year. Three hundred and sixty thousand years, (for the year of *prophetic* diction is, beyond all reasonable doubt, 12 months of 30 days each), of uninterrupted prosperity to the church—of the church as extended over a great portion of the human race—is a most delightful idea. And inasmuch as the promise has been made, that “the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent’s head,” why may we not suppose that the universal diffusion and triumph of Christianity will endure, for a period as long as this? Most gladly would I find reason, if I could, to acquiesce in such a delightful view of prophecy. But the laws of interpretation forbid me; and how can I repeal them?

No intimation is given by John, in Rev. 20: 4—6, that *days* stand for *years*. The *analogy* of the book, if we may trust the results to which we have already come, is against such an interpretation. *Designations of time* are, in their very nature, the least susceptible of all parts of language, of bearing a secondary or arbitrary meaning. In their own nature they are capable of but one tropical sense; and this is where a few particular numbers are taken, by customary usage, as the symbols of some generic and abstract idea; e. g. when *seven* is taken as the symbol of *completeness* or *fulness*, or a *thousand* for the idea of *much*, *great multitude*, *large quantity*, etc. Even this use is exceedingly limited extending to only three, seven, and



perhaps ten, forty, one thousand, and ten thousand. In all other cases, number is simply number, literally number and nothing else. From the nature of the case, those instances only can be excepted, where the writer or speaker tells us expressly, that he makes a less time (e. g. one day) the representative of a greater period (e. g. one year).

✓ *A thousand years*, then, in Rev. 20: 4—6, must mean simply what it says, or it must be interpreted as being symbolically employed in order to designate the generic idea of a very long period. That the Scriptures afford some ground for interpreting it in this latter manner, may be seen by considering for a moment the nature of the following expressions: "The Lord make you a thousand times as many as you are! God who keepeth covenant to a thousand generations. How should one chase a thousand! If there be an interpreter, one of a thousand. The cattle on a thousand hills are mine. A day in thy courts is better than a thousand. A thousand shall fall at thy side. Though he live a thousand years twice told. One man among a thousand have I found. A little one shall become a thousand. The city that went out by a thousand. One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

Thus there evidently runs, through the whole Bible, an idiom which employs *a thousand* as an indefinite expression to designate a great number, a large quantity; and we act consistently as critics, if we so interpret it in Rev. 20: 4—6. But we stand on ground still more safe and certain, if we interpret it simply in accordance with its literal and obvious meaning.

✓ That the *final* proportion of men who will be redeemed, must be greater, yea much greater than that which will be lost, seems to be made certain by the ancient promise, that "the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's

head." Gen. 3: 15. But how can this promise be true, if, after all, Satan shall destroy the larger portion of the human race? We may reasonably conclude, then, that during the millennial period, when many of the present causes of abridging and destroying human life shall cease, and the means of subsistence be greatly increased, that the world will support some twenty or more times as many people as it now does, (which it is clearly capable of doing), and that the predominant part of these, during all that period, will be Christians. I say the *predominant part*, for this is all that Rev. xx. allows me to say. Immediately after the expiration of the thousand years, Gog and Magog come up "from the four corners of the earth," i. e. its distant extremities—come up "in numbers as the sand of the sea," in order "to make war against the saints," Rev. 20: 8. Now there is not the least intimation here, on the part of the writer, that Gog and Magog are *apostates* or *deserters* from the Christian camp. On the contrary, their abode is not among Christians in the civilized and christianized parts of the world, but only in the *four corners* or most distant extremities of the world. That the number of them is said to be "like the sands of the sea," is enough to show, that Christianity had not yet, during the thousand years, extended to the *whole* of the human race. That *apostates* from Christianity, and from *true* Christianity, (for surely such is the religion of the Millennium), could at once be made of numbers so great as are here named, is out of all reasonable question. The thing is impossible on the ground of divine promise, and improbable as it respects the habits and the nature of sanctified men.

It would be foreign to my present purpose to dwell on the question: Who are Gog and Magog? The reader may find them, and the history of the war which they will

wage, in Ezek. xxxviii. xxxix. When Ezekiel and John wrote, *Gog and Magog*, in the common language of the day, were names which imported in Palestine and in the East, what the word *Scythian* did of old to the Greeks and the Romans. They were the hordes of the northern Caucasus region, who were regarded as *barbarians*, and (if I may make use of a phrase familiar to us) as *living out of the world*. By people such as these, John predicts that the third and last great assault will be made upon the church. It will be violent, but short. And the sequel will be the *universal* reign of Christianity; for Satan will now be cast into the lake of fire (Rev. 20: 10), and there will of course "be nothing to hurt or offend in all God's holy mountain."\*

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\* In Ezek. 38: 2, Gog and Magog are associated with *Meshech* and *Tubal*; which circumstance gives us a clue to the locality of those nations. There is no room to doubt, that Meshech and Tubal lie near the south-eastern extremity of the Euxine Sea, or between that and the Caspian lake; see Rosenm. Bib. Geog. I. p. 240. Ges. Lex. in verba. The country of Magog must have been somewhere in this vicinity, and most probably it lay northward among the Caucasian mountains. So the whole current of ancient writers seems to have decided. Jerome (on Ezek. 38: 2) says, that "Magog means the Scythian nations, fierce and innumerable who live beyond the Caucasus and the lake Maeotis, and near the Caspian Sea, and spread out onward even to India." In the same manner Theodoret speaks, and also Asseman, Biblioth. Orient. III. Pars II., 16, 17, 20. The Arabian books are full of appeals to Gog and Magog; as may be seen in Klaproth's Asiat. Magazine, I. p. 138 seq., where a large selection of passages is exhibited. Mohammed has more than once named Gog and Magog in the Coran. In Sura XVIII. 94, he alludes to Alexander the Great as building a high wall of brass and iron, between the mountain passes of the north, in order to keep Gog and Magog from making excursions into the more southern regions. Toward the end of the world, this wall, as he represents it, will be broken down, and Gog and Magog will rush through, and lay waste the regions of the South.

The assumption so often made, that *the end of the world* is immediately to follow the overthrow of Gog and Magog, is by no means certain, nor even at all probable. It does

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They, with other infidels, will then all be turned into Gehenna, and the end of the world will come. Another allusion to this same tradition may be found in Sura XXI. 95 seq.

In accordance with this, a Syrian Jacobite Christian, about the same period in which Mohammed lived, wrote a poem in Syriac hexameters, which has been published in G. Knös' Syriac Chrestomathy, A. D. 1807. This remarkable production also assigns to Alexander the building of an iron wall or gates between the northern [Caucasian] mountain-pass, in order to keep out Gog and Magog from more southern Asia. Near the close of the world the gates are to be opened, and Gog and Magog, with countless hosts, will overrun and destroy all the southern countries.

*Facts* illustrating the traditions developed by these ancient writers, may easily be stated. Russia took possession of the region between the Euxine and Caspian Seas, about A. D. 1772. S. G. Emelin, a man of scientific acquirements, was soon sent out to explore the newly acquired territory. In his book of travels, published in A. D. 1774, he mentions that he found a high wall, with towers at short distances, and much of them in a state of entire preservation, running from Derbend, the head quarters of the Russians on the Caspian Sea, toward the Euxine Sea, and extending, according to the universal tradition of the inhabitants of that region, entirely to the Euxine Sea. All agreed in calling this *the wall of Gog and Magog*.

In addition to this it should be stated, that the celebrated English traveller, R. Kerr Porter, visited Derbend in 1819, where the same story was told him respecting the wall in question; but accident prevented his going to see it; Travels II. p. 520.

The reader who wishes to pursue the further investigation of this curious subject, may consult Rosenm. Bib. Geog. I. p. 244. Ritter's Erdkunde. Th. II. p. 834 seq. Bayer, De Muro Caucaseo, Opusc. p. 94. Reinegg, Beschreibung des Caucasus, I. p. 120. See also Rosenm. Comm. in Ezek. 38: 2.

Thus it appears, that those "Asiatic Scythians," Gog and Magog, were a people well known in ancient times, and greatly dreaded. We cannot suppose that either Ezekiel or John meant their names



not follow from the fact, that John immediately proceeds, in his prophecy, to give an account of the general judgment. All that follows from this is, that it was to John's purpose to touch next upon this, having shown the complete and final triumph of Christianity over all enemies. The usage of the prophets, in respect to junctions of such a nature, in their descriptions, can hardly fail to be noticed by every observing eye. For example; in Is. II., the prophet joins the coming of the Messiah, with the severe punishment of the oppressive and luxurious Jews of that time. He goes still further, and even apparently links the one with the other by the phrase *in that day*. Again he describes, in most graphic language, the punishment of his contemporaries, chap. VII. VIII., and then unites with this description one of the most prominent Messianic passages in the Old Testament, viz., that in chap. IX., "To us a Child is born, a Son is given, etc." In chap. X. he gives a copious account of the invasion of the king of Assyria, and of his overthrow; and then he immediately subjoins a glowing description of the Messianic and Millennial day, chap. XI. Here only the particle  $\gamma$  (*and*) = *καί* in Rev. 20: 11, stands between the two descriptions, without an intimation of any interval. With the overthrow of Idumea, in chap. XXXIV., he unites a glowing description of the Messianic day, chap. XXXV. In the last twenty-six

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to be *literally* interpreted; but so much we must suppose, viz., that both prophets used these appellations as familiar designations of a numerous and savage people. It is the work of destruction which they rush forth to accomplish—the destruction of the people of God. But they are speedily arrested, and meet with a fearful doom. So will it doubtless be with the last and powerful enemies of the church, from whatever quarter they may come. "When the enemy shall rush in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against them."

chapters of this prophet, the constant interchange of deliverance from the Babylonish exile and the deliverance wrought by the Messiah, cannot escape any but the most inattentive reader.

Thus it is in the *evangelical* prophet. Have any others followed in the same path? They have. The book of Daniel unites with the end of the four great monarchies, viz., the Babylonish, the Medo-Persian, that of Alexander the Great, and that of his immediate Successors, the coming of the Messiah, yea the coming of the Millennium. So in chap. II. VII. and IX. In other prophets the same thing is equally common, in cases of Messianic prophecy.

Well has it been said, by an acute and learned interpreter of our times, that the prophets are like those, who, placed on an eminence, have a widely extended view of a *distant* country. But that country is one of hills and mountains, not an extended plain. Of course they can see only the tops of eminences, and have no means of judging how extensive are the valleys or table-lands between. They do not undertake, therefore, to calculate *distances*. In speaking of these things, they turn the attention of their readers only to what they have seen themselves, i. e. the prominent parts of the landscape.

So with John and other prophets. Great events—the prominences of history—are seen and described, but (for the most part at least) not the intervals of time between. In the case before us, the general judgment comes *after* the description of the fall of Gog and Magog, because the writer, having now brought the church to a state of universal triumph and security, hastens to complete his work by pointing out the glorious rewards that will ensue, and the everlasting blessedness of the church triumphant.

My belief therefore is, that the setting sun of our world will be in unclouded glory. “Its hoary head,” to borrow

from another sacred writer, "will indeed be a crown of glory." My principal reason for this is, that the promises made to the church and to its Redeemer; the benevolence of the Godhead, and the triumph of mercy over the malignity and craft of Satan; and also the analogy of all God's purposes and doings, in which there is always an advance toward the highest good—all unite in seeming to require such an interval of rest and peace and prosperity to his church. How long this will be, how many will become sons and daughters of the Lord Almighty, I do not pretend to know. But so much we may believe, viz., that "the Seed of the woman will bruise the serpent's head;" and therefore that the number of the redeemed, from our fallen race, will at last immeasurably exceed that of the lost.

What a consoling hope, in such a world of sin and misery as this! Few indeed, thus far, can with any probability be numbered among the children of God. Every year is sending its thirty millions to his tribunal, and has long been executing the same tremendous task. But is it to be always so? The thousand years of triumph to the church we have seen not to be strictly universal. *Numbers as the sand of the sea* are still in the regions of Gog and Magog. And shall one thousand years only, of the reign of Christianity thus limited, be allowed for the Redeemer's triumph, and more than *six* thousand for Satan's? Forbid it, all that is benevolent in the Godhead! Forbid it, dying love of Jesus! Forbid it, all the precious promises which the words of everlasting truth present, engraved in characters of light, and elevating the hopes of dying man to a heaven of unfading glory, filled with countless beings made in the image of their God and Saviour!

But while I do most earnestly hope, and cannot but believe, that the close of the world's existence will be a period of great prosperity and glory to the church, I cannot

in any degree harmonize with those views respecting this period, which apply to it the descriptions in Rev. xxi. xxii., and the corresponding portions of the Old Testament prophets. The *new heaven* and the *new earth*, in Rev. 20: 1, is plainly not the old heaven and old earth *refitted* and *repaired*. "The first heaven and the first earth have *passed away*, and there is no more sea," Rev. 21: 1. Peter says, also, that "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements burning shall be dissolved, and the earth and the works therein shall be burned up, κατακαήσεται, *shall be utterly consumed*." 2 Pet. 3: 10. The general judgment, preceded by the universal resurrection of the dead, Rev. 20: 11—15, is evidently, in the view of the sacred writers, the end of the probation-state of the human race. So Paul, who also informs us, that then the *mediatorial office* itself will be given up, so that the work of redemption can no longer proceed; 1 Cor. 15: 24—28. These facts, being thus plainly established, it follows that a place (so to speak) entirely new, fitted for the residence of beings with "spiritual bodies," (as Paul calls them 1 Cor. 15: 44), is absolutely necessary. The apprehension that the present material world is to be so improved and modified, as to become the future residence of the blessed, agrees neither with the future state and condition of the blessed, nor with the declarations of the Scriptures, nor with the most ardent hopes of spiritual Christians. No; all true believers "are to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall they ever be with the Lord," 1 Thess. 4: 17.

But I am wandering from my theme, allured by the delightful prospects of the church which are unfolded in the Apocalypse. Let us return, and briefly conclude the present discussion, in which mere *hints* have been aimed at



and suggested, by a simple recapitulation of what has been done, and the grounds on which it stands.

### § 5. CONCLUDING REMARKS.

There must be, there are, some principles applicable to the interpretation of language, which all men are bound to acknowledge and observe. If this be not true, then there is an end to all certainty in the results of interpretation, and we never can tell what the Scriptures do mean, or what they may not mean.

The reason why I have endeavored to show that the *double* or *occult* sense of Scripture is inadmissible, is, that if we admit it, then we must give up all hope of ever fixing with certainty upon the original meaning of many portions of Scripture, and specially of the prophecies. If a part of what Daniel predicts, for example, must be applied first to Antiochus Epiphanes (which is certain), and then may be applied, as to its occult meaning, to Antichrist, to the Pope, to Mohammed, or to all of these, then there is an end to all certainty in exegesis, because there is no tribunal before which the *occult* sense can be brought and by which it may be tried. It is because the prophecies have been so extensively interpreted in this way, specially in the English and American churches, that I have thought it important to say so much on this subject. He, who understands the lengths to which this principle of interpretation has been carried, will not accuse me of having overrated the importance of the subject.

It has also been a very common thing, even among the better class of interpreters in some cases, to speak of some of the prophecies, and to treat them, as having been unintelligible at the time when they were uttered, and as coming to be understood only after they are fulfilled. Such a

supposition of course throws to the winds some of the leading principles of hermeneutics ; for if the language ever had a meaning, it must have been discoverable by the aid of those principles ; and if a meaning is ever assigned to it, it must be in accordance with these, or else it can be of no solid worth. An arbitrary application of language to particular events, without support from grammar and exegesis, is *conjecture*, not exposition. Besides all this, such a prophecy was at most no *prediction* surely, no *revelation* ; for, by the supposition, it meant nothing intelligible before the events took place to which it relates, and therefore could make and did make no *revelation* at all.

It is time for the Christian church to have done with such problems as these. On such a ground, the Bible is no "light shining in a dark place," as Peter affirms it to be. It only adds another deepening shade to the gloom already spread around. Why should not, then, such a principle, so dishonourable to divine *teachers* and to that word which is "a light to our feet and a lamp to our path," be held up to view, and its deformities exposed ?

As to that portion of this little work which has respect to the *times* designated in the Apocalypse and in the book of Daniel, the disputes of the present day sufficiently show the necessity of such inquiries. I have endeavored to walk in a straight and simple path. My first great position has been, that *the Bible means what it says*. When it designates times and seasons, therefore, the simple and obvious sense of the words is always to be followed, unless there is some special reason for departing from it. That reason can be only one, viz., when the context gives us information that such a departure is to be made. This is done in Exek. 4: 5, 6, and in Num. 14: 34. The passage in Dan. 9: 24 plainly, as we have shown pp. 79 seq., does not belong to this category. Other cases than these, I am

not aware of. In all others, therefore, where no such departure from the obvious sense is intimated, it follows of course that we are not at liberty to depart from it. If this be not a principle plain and certain, I know of none in the so called science of hermeneutics.

✓ My second aim has been, to prove that history has preserved to us such a knowledge of facts, as will serve to show that the prophecies in question have been fulfilled, in their plain and obvious sense. If this effort has been successful, then the whole subject is at rest. The controversies of the present day, about the Pope, and Mohammed, and the French Revolution, and the infidel corps of Illuminati, and all like matters or persons, is a thing which has no specific ground or basis in Daniel or in John. What John declared would *take place shortly*, happened according to his prediction; and if so, the dispute, *whether it is all to happen over again*, after so many centuries, cannot be a dispute of much interest or importance. One fulfilment is enough.

Even if we should concede that 1260 days mean so many years, and that *Romanism* is the object of John's predictions, yet I do not see how we can ascertain where to begin this period. The Romish church was three or four centuries in coming into being; or rather, one might even say with truth, that it was not consummated until the Council of Trent. Where then is the *terminus a quo*? I am aware of the usual periods to which so many refer the beginnings of this apostasy. But they are not at all of a nature sufficiently definitive or decisive to be entitled to such a bad pre-eminence. It must be mere conjecture which fixes upon the *beginning* of such a period for such reasons; and of course the *entl* must be like the beginning, i. e. indefinite. ✓ The truth is, that *heathen-idolatry*, and that only, is characterized in Rev. XIII. seq.; and all efforts

to make out any thing different from this, must be revolting to the simple reader, who seeks merely to understand what the writer meant.

Plain as all this seems to my mind, yet I see many, and some very sensible persons too, greatly agitated about the end of the world, which, as many predict at the present day, is to come in 1843. I do not say, it will not; for I do not know this. But I do say, that it would be well for the public to call to mind the many predictions of the like nature which have already been wrecked, and which were maintained with as much learning, and as much confidence too, as present theories are. Specially would they do well to call to mind the notable case of John Albert Bengel, one of the best Greek scholars and sacred expositors of the last age, and the editor of the famous critical edition of the New Testament which bears his name. His piety and talents are beyond fair question; and sobriety, on all other subjects except the Apocalypse, was a prominent trait of his character. He spent the flower of his life in pursuit of the secret meanings of the Revelation. He came to a full persuasion, at last, that he had discovered them. He announced them to the world; and in so doing, he says, with much modesty, that the only reason he has to doubt the disclosure of these secrets is, that it was made to so unworthy a person as himself. Yet, in the full confidence that the occult matters of the Apocalypse had actually been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, he published his book. Most devoutly does he thank God for the wonderful disclosures which it is designed to make. The grand period as to all the leading parts of the great drama, according to his book, was to be consummated in A. D. 1836. If the face of the world should not be entirely changed at that period, then, he says, the church must believe that he has been mistaken. But that the change



expected would take place, he entertained not a shadow of doubt.

So far, this great and good man. And we—we have lived to see 1836, and the world is still moving round the sun, and its busy inhabitants going on much as in days of yore. We never once thought, at that period, of the *Bengelian* revelations; and cannot now discover the record of them on the page of history.

Many a confident prediction, uttered by other *romancers* in prophecy, has met with the same fate, and been wrecked on the rocks whither the mighty stream of time hath borne them. Such is doubtless the destiny of many others also; and yet, all this does not seem to diminish the confidence of those who write theological romances! Be it so. If there must needs be enthusiasts and visionaries, (and so it would seem), why may not this department of exegetical theology exhibit its due proportion?

Once for all, however, we may beseech such interpreters to listen to a word of caution. I will not reproach them with the presumption of undertaking to expound a book, which, of all others in the Bible, demands the deepest knowledge of the *original* Scriptures, and of the prophetic idiom, when they have not well studied either. But may I not ask, how it came about, that when Jerusalem was to be destroyed, the exact time was so carefully kept back, until the very eve of its accomplishment, from the disciples of Christ? Mark tells us (13: 3), that the three favourite disciples went to him and asked him the question respecting the time of its desolation. He tells us, also, that Jesus declared “this time (v. 32) to be *unknown*, not only to men, but to the angels in heaven, yea to the Son himself.” It was only after the Roman army was in Palestine and had begun their task, that the time was declared to John, Rev. 11: 2.

But we may appeal to a passage still more applicable to the present case, and which comprises more within its grasp. The anxious disciples asked of the risen Saviour, *when he would restore the kingdom to Israel?* It matters not what particular thing they had in mind, i. e. whether it was purely the spiritual kingdom of Christ, or the ecclesiastico-political kingdom which they had once been expecting. The answer is one which should be engraven on a frontispiece and put upon the study door of every writer on the prophecies, who indulges the expectation of being able to point out the day and the hour of fulfilment. It was this: IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW THE TIMES OR THE SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HAS PUT IN HIS OWN POWER. Acts 1: 6, 7.

If now it was not for even *apostles* to know these secrets, is it for every curious and speculating mind, that knows little indeed either of history or exegetical science, to tell us all about such matters? Is it not presumption to engage in such an undertaking? God has undoubtedly determined upon the times and seasons, when all events that respect his church will take place. But it does not follow, that he has revealed this matter to us. We are satisfied that he has not. Why not leave to him the secret things which he claims as his own prerogative? Why assume to ourselves a position, which he does not allow us to assume?

But alas! all the disappointments of writers teeming with fancy and filled with confidence, in days that are past, seem to have made no serious impression on the like class of writers at the present period. As soon as ruthless time mows down one parterre of flowers with his scythe, another is planted on its ruins, with the hope of having a more permanent crop. And so it will still be. When 1843 passes away, and the world still moves on without being jostled from its orbit; the Pope still issues his decrees from

the Vatican ; the Sultan still haughtily points to his peering minarets and the banners of Islam ; and faithful and humble Christians are still labouring and suffering as before ; then some more fortunate adventurer will perhaps discover latent error in former calculations, (as recently has been the case in respect to those of Bengel), and we shall then have a new period fixed upon as the consummation-period of all. But this will in all probability be far enough in advance to be out of the reach of the generation who are addressed, and therefore beyond their power of absolute denial or of decisive correction. When this is once done with some good degree of ingenuity, then a new tune will be played upon the old instrument ; and it will be listened to and applauded because it is new. Thus we go on, amusing ourselves from one decennium to another, ever pursuing in fact the same phantoms, although we give chase to them in different directions. When such chases will be over, it would be as difficult to say, as to fix upon the specific period of the Millennium.

✓ It may not be improper here to say, that while the exact time cannot be discovered by us, and is not (as I believe) revealed in the Scriptures, yet something may be said in respect to the probable period, when the general diffusion of Christianity will take place. My answer to the question respecting this would be, that *it will speedily take place, when all Christians, or at least the great body of them, come up to the standard of duty, or come very near to this standard, in their efforts to diffuse among the nations of the earth the knowledge of salvation.* The divinely appointed means will secure the end, because God will bless them. Every Christian, then, and every Society for propagating the knowledge of Christianity, is helping to usher in the millennial day, when they ply this work to the best of their ability. On such a ground, the strongest

encouragement is held out to all faithful disciples. They may rest assured, that "their work and labor in the Lord are not in vain."

But let us, on the other hand, suppose that a definite time has been disclosed in the Apocalypse, or elsewhere in the Scripture, before which it is impossible that the Millennium should commence; what encouragement could Christians have to engage in efforts to christianize the world before that period arrives? They must take every step with the assurance that the end is unattainable. Divine decree has fixed the time, and disclosed it to them, before which all means and all efforts to convert the nations must be unavailing. The consequence of course would naturally be, a total remission, on the part of true believers in the divine word, of all efforts to evangelize the world. And can it be thought credible, that the same voice which has proclaimed: "Go ye, and preach the gospel to every creature," has also proclaimed, (and so we may rest assured), that before the middle or close of the 19th century the nations will not hearken to it? This is not the manner in which the great Head of the church is wont to deal with his servants. He has told them, that *the times and the seasons the Father keeps in his own power*. For the rest, they have only to obey his commands as to proclaiming the gospel, and leave the event with him.

One thing more I feel constrained to say, before I quit this theme of *the latter day of glory*. Whether we have respect to the Millennium, usually so named, or to a more prosperous period still, near the close of time, the extravagant apprehensions so often entertained and avowed respecting this season of prosperity, seem quite unworthy of credit. The prophets have indeed employed most glowing language, in describing the future season of prosperity; and all they have said, will doubtless prove to be true, in



the sense which they meant to convey. But let him who interprets these passages remember well, that they are *poetry*, and are replete in an unusual degree with figurative language and poetic imagery. Let him call to mind, moreover, that the language employed in the last twenty-seven chapters of Isaiah, in order to describe the return from the Babylonish captivity, and the prosperity which would ensue, is scarcely, if at all, less glowing than that which has respect to the future prosperity of the Messiah's kingdom. Besides all this, he must never forget that the present stage of our existence is *probationary*, and therefore sin, suffering, and sorrow must be connected with it. Are we to be told in earnest, that men will, at some future period, be born destitute of any taint or free from any evil consequence of Adam's fall, and that they will be without sin, and need no regeneration or sanctification? And must we thus be persuaded to believe, that they will not need a *Redeemer* too? for this would be a necessary consequence of such a state of things. Christian churches, also, and a ministry of reconciliation, will no longer be needed; and even all civil government may be dispensed with! No; we must not indulge in such visionary conceits as these. The time will never be, so long as *probation* lasts, when there will not be unregenerate men to be converted; Christians to be instructed, guided, comforted, reprov'd, chastened; and therefore abundance of work for Christian ministers. Their labours will indeed be crowned with success; but occasion for labour will always be occurring. "Whom the Lord loveth, he chasteneth," is a truth never to be lost sight of, in the preparation of sons and daughters for a state of glory. In the hands of God, suffering and trial become the means of the Christian's *higher* good; and therefore we cannot expect those means to be excluded from the millennial state. A great

diminution of evil of every kind we may well expect, when the latter day of glory shall come. But men will still be frail dying creatures, and undergo pain and decay. They will be imperfect in holiness, and will need admonition and correction. They will still only "know in part, and believe in part," and will need a constant process of sanctification and illumination. The visionary schemes then, which represent the Millennium as the return of the primitive paradisiacal state, are not for a moment to be listened to by a sober and discreet man. The state of Adam's race is fixed and certain. A world of sin and suffering is as sure to be their probationary habitation, as that the decree of God will stand. Yet this same world will be the place where his rich and abounding compassion will be shown in the most conspicuous manner. "Glory will be given to God in the highest, that there is peace on earth, and good will manifested to the children of men."

It is no part of my design to utter personal reflections, or to cast reproach, on those, who, in England and in our country, have for these many years been labouring to excite the churches to engage in speculations respecting the prophecies. That many of them are well-meaning men, and even men of ardent piety, I should be among the last to call in question. But John Albert Bengel was all this, and much more. He was a pillar of the higher order in the temple of God. His learning and philology command homage, even at the present time. Yet "the baseless fabric of his vision has not left a wreck behind." And so it has fared—so I apprehend it will fare—with many a vaticination equally confident with his. Why should we not take warning, when we hear the surges roar, and see the breakers ahead, to steer the good ship in a safer and more quiet direction?

If the matter in question merely concerned a few ardent

men, prone to dive into turbid depths and seek for pearls there, we might let them dive on, and pass quietly upon our own way. But the church is assailed on all sides with the claims of these hariolations. It has even come to this, that the quiet and sober Christian is reproached with a want of faith, because he hesitates to engage in them, or to sympathize with them. Ministers of the Gospel are in some cases looked upon with coldness, and even with disdain, because they will not preach these fanciful interpretations. It is time, therefore, for common sense and reason to rouse themselves up for action, and make sober, honest, thorough inquiry as to what ground there is for all this excitement. There is nothing in sacred hermeneutics, that casts such a stain on English and American expositors, as the character of their interpretation of some parts of the prophets. They have no standard, no landmark, no compass. Every man says "what is right in his own eyes," and then calls upon others to agree with him. The most ingenious and fluent man is most extensively applauded, ingenious in forming conjectures, and fluent in his mode of developing them. Thus, as we might expect, one book succeeds another with the greatest rapidity; and the public, at least a portion of it, ever thirsting after novelty, and excited by the hope of obtaining a look into the future, receive every new actor in this drama with more or less of applause. How often is one compelled to turn away from this spectacle, with an agitated and even mournful look, and exclaim: When will the churches learn to believe what their divine Master declared, in saying to his anxiously inquiring disciples: **IT IS NOT YOURS TO KNOW THE TIMES AND THE SEASONS, WHICH THE FATHER HATH PUT IN HIS OWN POWER.**

One thing must at all events be true. If the Bible is not to be interpreted by the common principles of language,

it cannot be interpreted at all, except by inspired men. Is there any promise to the church of such a class of interpreters? If not, then our only safety lies, in adopting and following out the common, well-known, and well-established principles of interpretation. That these are violated by the extravagant and unfounded views so common at the present day, lies upon the very face of the interpretations. The main object of this little book has been, to show *how* they are unfounded, and *why* they ought to be so regarded. And now I appeal to the sober judgment of every unprejudiced reader, and ask him the question: Am I not in the right, in insisting that all designations of time should be interpreted according to their obvious meaning, when no good reason can be given why we should depart from this? Are not the historical facts that I have adduced as the fulfilment of events predicted, as true to the representations in the prophecies, as other fulfilments to which we usually appeal? If so, why should we not be satisfied with them? Why should we persevere in looking to centuries in advance for fulfilment of that, respecting which it is repeatedly and solemnly declared, that *it shall take place SPEEDILY*.

Particularly would I urge one consideration here. It is this. How could it so happen, that all the various historical events to which I have adverted as fulfilments of prophecy, and which, it must in candour be granted, look very much like fulfilments, should have happened at times that coincide so exactly with the times designated in the prophecies? One or two of these we might account for on the ground of accident; but that so many events of the nature just described, should have all happened at the periods in question, and in regular order—is a matter which carries on its very face the stamp of being connected with prophecy.



If the sober and considerate portion of our religious community can be persuaded to give some due attention to this subject, and to insist on the application of sound principles to all prophetic exegesis, an important end will be answered. If others more capable than myself, and who have more leisure, can be roused up to pursue the investigations which are here but imperfectly commenced, and to expose any errors, or confirm any truths, which have now been suggested, this little book will not have been written in vain.

END.









14 DAY USE  
RETURN TO DESK FROM WHICH BORROWED  
**LOAN DEPT.**

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